

S E R M O N S

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS.

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|---|---|
| I. Salvation by the Cross
of Christ, a Doctrine
of Offence in all Ages. | VIII. Christ the only
Refuge. |
| II. The Knowledge of
Sin by the Law. | IX. On Simon the Pha-
risee, and the Woman
that was a Sinner. |
| III. The Necessity of
Maintaining a good
Conscience, and the
Extent of it. | X. The Christian's Cha-
racter, and inviolable
Safety. |
| IV. On the Gospel, and
the Nature of Faith in
it. | XI. Personal Obedience,
and imputed Righte-
ousness not to be sepa-
rated. |
| V. The Great Sin of
Unbelief. | XII. On Christian Hap-
piness. |
| VI. The dreadful End of
Unbelief. | XIII. The Judgment of
the Last Day. |
| VII. Alarming Visitations
Proofs of God's Love. | XIV. On the Heavenly
Happiness. |

By H. VENN, M. A. late Fellow of
Queen's College, Cambridge, and Lecturer
of *St. Alban's, Wood-Street.*

*To the Law, and to the Testimony: If they speak not according
to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them.*

Isa. viii. 20.

L O N D O N :

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M.DCC.LIX.

TO THE **SERMONS** ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS.

- VIII. Christ the only Saviour.
- IX. On Simon the Pharisee, and the Woman who was a Sinner.
- X. The Christian's Character, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.
- XI. On the Christian's Duty, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.
- XII. The Judgment of the Living.
- XIII. On the Christian's Duty, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.
- XIV. On the Christian's Duty, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.



- I. Salvation by the Cross.
- II. The Knowledge of God.
- III. The Knowledge of God.
- IV. On the Christian's Duty, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.
- V. On the Christian's Duty, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.
- VI. On the Christian's Duty, and his Obligations to God, and his Neighbour.
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By H. Venn, M. A. late Fellow of
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 of the Church of St. Andrew, Cambridge.

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MDCCLXIX.

TO THE
GENTLEMEN of CLAPHAM,
THE AUTHOR
Humbly begs leave to DEDICATE
THIS
VOLUME of DISCOURSES,
Justly Sensible of the Favour done him,
BY THEIR
CHOICE and RECOMMENDATION,
Which at first procured him the Appointment
to preach to them
THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

AND
Greatly obliged by the very many
Civilities and Marks of FRIENDSHIP,
Received by him,
During the Time of his Residence amongst them,

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Please to correct the following Errors of
the Press.

Page	Line.	24 OC 62
25.	28.	for Means, read Mean.
61.	16.	for then Umerciful, read the Unmerciful.
92.	3.	for some a present, read some present.
161.	6.	for understanding of what, read understand- ing what.
188.	15.	read Thy Throne O God.
189.	9.	for mortal, read moral.
196.	9.	for cometh, read bloweth.
198.	4.	for the Peace, read true Peace.
	21.	for Unpenitence, read Repentance.
199.	11.	for Conceptions, read Corruptions.
	14.	for designing, read desiring.
203.	21.	for Work, read Mark.
205.	22.	for Actions, read Actings.
208.	22.	leave out and.
257.	5.	for incites, read excites.
	14.	for Wrath, read Wealth.
323.	2.	for Solitations, read Sollicitations.

S E R M O N I.

Salvation by the Cross of CHRIST, a
Doctrine of Offence in all Ages.

I C O R. i. 23, 24.

*We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a
Stumbling-Block, and unto the Greeks
Foolishness; But unto them that are called,
Christ the Power of God, and the Wis-
dom of God.*

ALL the Opposition and Hatred
which the Truths of the Gos-
pel meet with from the World,
are particularly foretold.

But unhappily, thro' a most injurious
Restriction of those Declarations which

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Speak

speaking of Mens Hatred of the Truth of God, to the idolatrous Ages, and the Heathen Nations, the Sense and Intention of these Scriptures is well nigh lost; and the Doctrines of Salvation, with their Defenders, are often condemned, without Examination, now, as they used to be of old; because much disliked and too generally reviled.

It seems, therefore, an Attempt highly becoming every Person, who feels the least Degree, either of Zeal for the Success of the Gospel, or love to those who live in Subjection to it, to prove the unchangeable Contrariety between the Wisdom of the World, and the Wisdom of God revealed in his Gospel.

The Text affords us a fair Opportunity to evince this Truth, by informing us of the Reception of the Gospel, in the Beginning, amongst Jews and Gentiles.---It was a Stumbling-Block to the one, and Foolishness to the other. And by considering what their Prejudices respectively were against it, there will arise abundant Proof, that these Prejudices are only in some Degree abated and restrained, but in no wise abolished.

To

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To preach Christ crucified, is to maintain and inculcate, that by his *Blood* shed on the Cross, when in the Sinner's stead he substituted his own Divine Person, Atonement was made for Sin : That he purchased the Church to himself, by thus giving his Life a Ransom for it : And that only in Virtue of this Sacrifice, and the Office of Mediator, which he sustains in Consequence thereof,---is God the Father propitious to any Sinner, to give him now Repentance, and Faith; Pardon, and Peace; Power to conquer Sin; and hereafter eternal Life.

These Particulars, at least, are included in the Preaching of Christ crucified. Now the Prejudices of the Jews against it, were violent on several Accounts.--Earthly and sensual in their Affections, they looked for a Messiah, grand and more than royal. When behold, Jesus appears, who had been known to put his Hand to the Nail, and his Right-hand to the Workman's Hammer, a Carpenter, the Son of a Carpenter, Mark vi. 3. The Messiah they expected was to break from off their Necks the Roman, as Moses had done before the Egyp-

tian Yoke.---But Jesus they behold buffeted, spit upon, and crucified.

To preach therefore this poor Man, as the Almighty Saviour, in whose Life and Death, the earthly and sensual could see nothing but Disgrace, and Misery; and Faith in his atoning Blood, as the only Means of Reconciliation to God; was a Stumbling-Block, a Doctrine they could not get over. The more it was pressed, the more it offended their gross Apprehensions. And to this Day, their Posterity are wont to express their blasphemous Rancour against the Divine Jesus, by calling Him, that Fellow that was hanged.

But let not this Kind of Prejudice, be thought peculiar to either ancient or modern Jews, and restrained to them only. Since it is natural to the human Heart, and the Cause of that open Contempt shewn to the Precepts of Jesus Christ. Why are they generally disregarded? Why is Subjection to them vilified as a grievous Restraint? It is because in the Apprehension of unregenerate Men, the Lord who gave them, is still as poor, as in the Days of his Flesh. No Man by adhering to him with Simplicity, and godly Sincerity,

Sincerity, can hope to rise to the envied Summit of his Profession, to make the speediest Acquisitions in Wealth by Trade and Merchandize, or stand high in Esteem amongst Men. One of this Character, on the contrary, reproaching many by his uniform, zealous Piety, must pass through evil Report. He must forego not a few Opportunities of Gain or Advancement, by various Methods, which others, unconcerned about their Christian Character and Interest, will not scruple; and be content with such a Situation or Provision in Life, as will consist with a persevering, unblemished Faithfulness to his Lord and Saviour.

Was Jesus a temporal, as well as a spiritual King, a little more like the Messiah fondly expected by the Seed of Abraham after the Flesh, then there would be some Sense and Wisdom in exalting his Name, and seeking his Friendship:---As it is, We have no King, say the World, but Cæsar. This Man shall not rule over us. Now every Degree of Prejudice against the Doctrines of Christ, on this Account, is of the very same Kind, as that of the Jews was.

B 3d II. Preach-

II. Preaching Christ crucified, was a Stumbling-Block to the Jews, as it proposed a Method of Salvation, utterly hateful to Men, who had such proud Conceits of the Merit of their own Obedience. They sought Salvation by the Works of the Law, Rom. ix. 32. Many of them, who were delivered from their base-born Prejudices against the Meanness of the Saviour's Person; many who had a Zeal for God, so as to be exemplary and holy in their Conversation, went about, we are told, to establish this their own Righteousness, as the Foundation of their eternal Hopes, the Ground of their Acceptance with God. Under this fatal Mistake, concerning the Merit of their own Righteousness, and personal Virtue, to hear Pardon of Sin and Acceptance of those, who had been most enormous in Transgression, ascribed to Faith in the Name of Jesus; to hear it preached, that to the Ungodly and him that worketh not, (i. e. by way of making Atonement and Compensation for his Sins) *but believeth on him that justifieth the Ungodly*, his Faith is counted to him for Righteousness; what was this, in their Opinion, but to make Christ the

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Minister of Sin? What, but to encourage Men to serve their own wicked Lusts, whilst confident of escaping all Punishment, by believing on the Name of Christ. They blackened the Christians therefore as a Sect, who thought themselves at Liberty, to do what was good in their own Eyes; and who loosened the Obligations to Obedience, by reconciling the Practice of Sin, with the Blessing of Salvation.

And does not the very same Prejudice as strongly rule in every unconverted Heart? Are not all Men, as well as the Jews, naturally apt to place their Dependance for Mercy and Acceptance with God, on the *Merit* of their own Justice, Sobriety, Benevolence, and Regard to the Duties of private and public Prayer?

As these Things, must in no wise be neglected, and when performed on a right Principle, are well-pleasing to God: How many alas! substitute this their imperfect Obedience in the room of that Foundation which God hath laid in Zion; and depend on what they call a moral good Life, (though it fall shamefully short of that compleat Character) to recommend them to God, not on the Blood of the Covenant,

not on him, whose Name is called the Lord our Righteousness, Jer. xxxiii. 16.

The whole Body of Papists openly maintain the Merit of Works; and Multitudes amongst the Reformed, are to be found, who, departing from the very Principle of the Reformation, are poisoned with this Error.---An Error highly soothing to the proud independent Spirit of fallen Man, flattering his Vanity, by lessening the distance between God and him, and making him imagine he can enter, as it were, into Treaty with his Creator, and for so much Work done in his Service, account himself entitled to so much Wages.

To all Men, who thus extravagantly over-rate their own Performances, to preach Christ crucified, as the only *meritorious* Cause of our obtaining the least Mercy; to prove, that we are justified freely, thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus, and saved by Grace, through Faith: That the only Entrance into the true living Church of Christ, is a Renunciation of Self-righteousness, an Heart-felt Conviction, that we have no more Title, but through Christ, to the least Degree of Favour from God, than a Murderer hath to the Benefits of Society; this to the sober and

externally religious, who boast, like the Pharisee, of their own good Qualities, is a Stumbling-Block; a Doctrine irksome and galling,-----because it strips them of every Plea to Justification in themselves; reduces them to the same Necessity of begging for Pardon and Grace, in the Name of Jesus, and on Account of what he has done and suffered; as those, whom they looked upon as Sinners so much beyond themselves, even Publicans and Harlots.

Such a Stumbling-Block is this Doctrine, that even professed Members of the Church of England, (whose Service is full of it from one End to the * other) are yet incensed at it.---They vilify it as a licentious Doctrine, unfriendly to Morality, and an Enemy to good Works. As if the Obedience of Faith was not more fruitful, than what any Man can produce whose Spirit is lifted up within him. As if all Righteousness

* There is not one single Prayer in the whole Liturgy, which is not offered up in the Name of, or immediately directed to, the Son of God. And in those solemn Words, with which the Sacramental Bread and Wine are delivered to each Communicant, the Doctrine of Salvation by Christ alone, is most affectionately taught.

teousness, Goodness, and Truth, could not be effectually enforced as the Fruit of the Spirit, and the *necessary* Evidence we belong to Christ, unless the Blood of his Cross was made of none Effect : And there was no Method of securing the Practice of universal Holiness, which did not destroy, or obscure, the unsearchable Riches of the free Grace of Christ.

Yet so unwilling is every Man to walk humbly with God, under an habitual Sense, that he must always, and entirely stand beholden for every Degree of Favour, Assistance, and comfortable Hope, to the meritorious Performances of another,--confessing he is in himself, nothing, but Sin and Misery : That Thousands, and ten Thousands who repeat the Christian Creed, take Offence at this prime Article of it, till by a true Knowledge of their inner Man, they repent, and loath themselves for their Iniquity.

III. To preach Christ crucified was to the Jews a Stumbling-Block, because according to this Doctrine, they conceived themselves bound to allow God was manifest in the Flesh, or if they doubted whether Jesus was God incarnate, they were required

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red to trust in a crucified Man, for Salvation. Either of these they esteemed equally impious,---for the Command of their Law was, that they should have no Similitude of GOD ; and that, cursed was every one, who trusted in an Arm of Flesh. Unless they searched the Scripture, therefore, with a truly humble Mind, and understood the Voice of their own great Prophet, saying, the Son, which the Virgin should conceive, should be called *Immanuel*, i. e. GOD with us,---and that the Child born unto us, was also the *Mighty GOD* ; they could not but burn with Indignation, to hear it preach'd, *That there was no other Name given under Heaven, whereby Men must be saved, but the Name of the Lord Jesus.*---It was Blasphemy in their Ears to hear the Power, and Glory of the Redeemer thus magnified, as given for Salvation, to the Ends of the Earth.---

And is not the true and proper Divinity of Christ, cast out by very many to this Day? He must be a Stranger to the fashionable Sentiments, and the best received Writers of the present Age, who doth not know, what a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence it is, to declare

clare that God hath purchased the Church with his *own* Blood. Nay many, after denying for a time the Divinity of Christ, come at length to renounce the atoning Sacrifice he made by his Death, and to think of Gods only begotten Son, that he lived and died only for our Example.

Having thus proved the Parallel between the Objections of the Jews, to the Preaching of Christ crucified, and those which are still made, by Men of carnal Minds: I proceed to shew why this Doctrine was to the Greeks Foolishness, and still continues to be so, to Men of like Disposition.

The Greeks were the most civilized and polished of all Nations. Learning in every Part of Science; Debate and free Enquiry were carried on to a great Height, till an universal Scepticism was established.--- Now to Men of this Character and Complexion, the Preaching of Christ crucified was Foolishness, i. e. a Scheme only worthy to be laughed at: Too absurd for Men of Understanding and good Sense to receive.--- Much of the *marvellous* was to be found in the History of their own fabulous Gods, but nothing (they thought) more wild and unaccountable than this, that

that one who was declared to be in the Form of God, should take upon him the Form of a Servant, and die the infamous Death of a Malefactor : And that Life and Salvation should be obtained by such a Death, for all who should ever trust in his Name. Void of any just Sense of the Nature and Sinfulness of Sin, or the worth of their own immortal Souls, these Things seemed repugnant to Reason and common Sense.

Now of these Greeks, Men wise and infallible in their own Conceit, there are still a numerous Generation, Men who proudly take upon them to define, what is fit and reasonable for the Omniscient to do ; who bind him down to reveal nothing which they find not in themselves a Disposition to receive : Who instead of humbly submitting their Understanding to the Oracles of God, take or refuse what Part of them, suits with, or offends their preconceived Opinions. To such Persons, unawakened to any due Sense of Sin, or their own Demerit, the Doctrine of Christ crucified is Foolishness. These argumentative, free Enquirers (as they vauntingly call themselves) openly declare, that to suppose
the

the Son of God offered himself up by the eternal Spirit, as a proper vicarious Sacrifice; that he suffered the *Just* for the *Unjust* bearing our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, is an Affront to Man's Reason, and a Reflection on the Goodness of God.--- They lay therefore another Foundation for their eternal Hopes, and final Acceptance-- their own personal Virtue-- and explode, as one most reproachful Branch of systematic Divinity, that first Article of the Christian Creed, Salvation by Faith in his Blood, whom God hath set forth to be a *Propitiation* for Sin.

These are the principal Reasons, why the preaching of Christ crucified was of old a Stumbling-Block to the Jews, and is still so, to every one who is governed by an earthly, or a self-righteous Spirit; why it appeared at first Foolishness to the Greeks, and does the same still to all who like them, reject every Doctrine they cannot measure with the Line of their Reason. And from the obstinate Prejudices both of Jews and Greeks, against this Doctrine of Salvation by the Cross of Christ, there arises, I would observe in passing, a compleat Demonstration

tion of the Divine Original of the Gospel.---Had the Jews thankfully received it, in General, as the Power and Wisdom of God, the Heathen World of old, with much Appearance of Truth, and our baptized Apostates, would now with Triumph have urged the Objection, that the whole History of Jesus, was framed amongst themselves, and then easily propagated, where no Enemies were present to canvass and detect the Forgery. Or had the Heathen World immediately bowed down before the glorious Gospel--its Establishment, would have been no sufficient Evidence of its Heavenly Birth.

But when we see it, small in its Beginning, as the Seed of Mustard, yet shooting forth in the Midst of the most settled Contempt and bitter Hatred, spreading its Branches far and wide, tho' abhorred by the Jews as Blasphemy against their God, despised by the Wise and Philosophic, and outraged by the People: What more satisfactory Proof could we ask or desire, that the glorious God maintained it, as his own Cause, and marching before it, made a Way for it, to run and be glorified, till it

it reached from one End of the Earth unto the other.

How worthy it was of such Protection and Success, will appear, from a due Consideration of the second Part of the Text, which teaches us, that however proud, earthly Minds, may reject, or despise the Preaching of Christ crucified, he is in this character to them that are called, i. e. who hear the Voice of the Son of God, commanding them to believe, and obey, He is to them, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.

The Power of God, because in his Mediatorial Transactions, in the Establishment of his Gospel, and in the present Efficacy of his Grace on the Hearts of all them that believe, a Power truly and properly Divine, shews forth itself in him. Nothing less than the Power of God, they are persuaded, could make him strong enough to bear their Sins in his own Body on the Tree, and by that one Oblation of Himself, make Atonement for them.--Nothing less than Almighty Power, could bring together in one, what in Nature seem as widely, and as necessarily remote, as the East from the West---A sinful Rebel, and a Sin-hating God,

God, and by the Blood of his Cross make Peace between them.

Christ crucified, is to them that are called, the Power of God, because in this Character, he established his Kingdom upon the Necks of his Enemies, against the combined Force, Malice, and Cruelty of a World dead in Trespasses and Sins---No sooner was the Word of this Salvation by the Blood of his Cross, received, then the Prisoners of the God of this World were set free---even Thousands, whose religious Rites were execrable---who were such absolute Vassals as to offer their Sons and their Daughters unto Devils; no sooner did they hear the joyful Tidings of a Saviour crucified for them, then they were translated from under the Power of Satan into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. And from the Strength of their Chains, and the tyrannous Dominion their Enemies held over them, they plainly saw, the Author of their Deliverance, was the Power of God unto Salvation.

III. Christ crucified is to them who are called the Power of God, because he worketh mightily by his Spirit to change and renew their Hearts, who receive this

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Doctrine.

Doctrine.--Anger, Pride, and Stubbornness of Will, are subdued by the Knowledge of him. All their inordinate Affections and evil Concupiscence are mortifying daily; and being delivered through Christ, from the Dominion of every sinful Habit and Temper, they find themselves enriched by him *also* with living Righteousness---with Love, Joy, Peace, Temperance, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness, and Charity.--And from this glorious new Creation of their Souls after the Image of God, they cannot but acknowledge the surpassing Excellence, and Divinity of the Power, that has wrought them, to this self-same Thing.

V. Christ crucified, is to them that are called, the Wisdom, no less evidently then the Power of God---because they behold in his Atonement, the most striking Manifestation of this Attribute. How God could be just, and yet the Justifier of Rebels against his adorable Majesty and perfect Law, was a Question none in Heaven or Earth was able to resolve. For Indignation against Sin, and Punishment of it, seem essential to the Idea of a Just and Holy God. And were simple Repentance and Reformation, valid and sufficient of them-

themselves, to atone for Sin against God, it might reasonably be thought no very high Offence to break a Law, when the Injury could so easily be repaired.---And thus the very *Way* of pardoning Sin, would encourage and embolden Men in the Practice of it.

To prevent any such pernicious Conclusion, God hath set forth his Son, wounded, bruised, and crucified, as the *only Propitiation* for Sin : An Argument, which appeals at once both to our Reason and our Senses,---teaching us the dreadful Demerit of Sin, and the perfect Purity of God,---Since only through his dear Son's offering himself for Sin, Mercy and Truth could meet together; Righteousness in God, and Peace towards Men could kiss each other.

Christ crucified is to them who are called the Wisdom of God, because they perceive the peculiar Force of this Doctrine to establish Obedience to the Law, and make Men most *observant* of it, at the same Time that it cuts away all the Ground of Self-Righteousness.

Man, from the excessive Pride of his Heart, is ever seeking his own Glory.--When

changed in some Respects, and freed from the Follies and Vices which mislead, and enslave others, he is wont to swell with Self-Admiration. This made the Stoics amongst the Heathens utter such horrid Blasphemies concerning their own fancied Perfection-- Hence Seneca dared to declare, Epist. 3. *Est aliquid---quo sapiens, antecedit Deum-- ille enim naturæ beneficio non suo, sapiens est.* "There is something wherein a wise Man challenges the Preference of God himself, i. e. because He is good, only through the Advantage of his Nature, but the wise Man by his own Labour." This abhorred Self-Conceit, made the Scribes and Pharisees less prepared to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, then even Publicans and Harlots.

But in the Doctrine of Christ crucified, the Believer, beholds the Interests of Holiness inviolably secured by the most express *Commands*, and the Practice of Obedience, urged as the distinguishing Mark, whereby the Disciples of Christ are to be known; and yet the Lord alone is exalted, as the meritorious Cause of their Acceptance.

All their 'Righteousnesses, ever must they say, are as filthy Rags. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for he hath redeemed

deemed us to God with his Blood. And so effectually does this Contrivance of infinite Wisdom, operate on the Hearts of those who receive the Doctrine of Christ crucified, that many of those, who have been as the Salt of the Earth, and the Light of the World, by the Excellency and Brightness of their Christian Character, have ever thought themselves vile Dust and miserable Sinners. Thus, the great Instrument of the World's Conversion, thoroughly possessed of this Doctrine, and *living by Faith in the Son of God, as loving him, and giving himself for him,* to his dying Day, accounted himself the least of all Saints, and the Chief of Sinners. This Power to bring down the Haughtiness of Man, and abase him in his own Eyes, St. Paul affirms, is peculiar to this Doctrine, when in Answer to that Question, where is *Boasting* then? replies, it is excluded? by what Law? by the Law of Works, no. But by the Law of Faith. The Knowledge of Christ crucified, alone suppresses every proud rising of the Heart, and makes a Man, whatever he is, whatever he hath, glory not in himself,

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but in the Lord his Righteousness and Strength.

Lastly, Christ crucified, is to them who are called, the Wisdom of God, because they find, when the Heart is powerfully impressed with this great Doctrine, fervent Love to God, and his dear Son, sincere and universal Good-Will to Man, unlimited Obedience, and the most grateful Pleasure in performing it, are the Fruits which grow from this generous Root. Every Degree of secret Pride, and Self-Righteousness has the Nature of some rank Weed, which impoverishes the Ground of the Heart, and hurts all that grows near it. It makes a Man think highly of his own Performances, and of course, rest satisfied with a few of them, as sufficient.--- It reconciles him to Things inconsistent with his Heavenly Calling, imagining that by being *very good* in some Instances, or at some stated Periods, he may at others choose his own Humour. Add to this, that by such Self-Complacency, the Riches of the free Grace of God, which should fire all his Soul with Gratitude, which should mightily constrain him to abound in every good Word and Work, if not totally hid,
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is exceedingly obscured; whilst sometimes he is looking at his own Virtues, and sometimes at the Merits and Righteousness of Christ.

The true Christian, on the contrary, knowing that neither his best Works, nor he himself in this best Estate, can bear the Severity of God's Judgment, glories only in the Cross of Christ,----and feels himself Day after Day, accepted only in the Beloved. And believing with his Heart, the utter Impossibility of his offering up any Thing, that can be well-pleasing to God, but what is washed in the Blood of his dear Son, and presented by his Mediation; he finds the Love of Christ constraining him. He casts not his Eyes upon the Good he has done, but this is his continual increasing Desire, to do all that possibly lieth in him; to walk worthy of that Saviour, who has bought him, with his own Blood, who is sanctifying him by his Grace, and will save him by his Merits.

From what has been proved, it follows, that it is not the Business of Christian Preachers, only, or principally to shew the Reasonableness or Excellence of moral Righteousness, or the Limits to those several Duties, which yet must be performed.

But our Office, like that of the Baptists, is to cry, behold the Lamb of God! Look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of your Faith, *that you may lay aside every Weight, and the Sin that doth most easily beset you.*

By Preaching thus, we shew unto Men, where their Help lieth; how all their Wants may be fully supplied, and all their Weakness strengthened.---We direct them to him, whose Blood alone can cleanse from Guilt, and whose Spirit can set at Liberty from Sin. And in Order to make that Obedience which is indispensable, easy and pleasant to practice, we display the amazingly free Love of Christ to Sinners, that their Souls may be fired with Gratitude *to live to him, who died for them and rose again.*

2dly, We must preach Christ crucified, because we have no Promise of Success to our Labours, if we preach any Thing else. If any Good is done to the Souls of those who hear us, it must be, by the Power and Demonstration of God's Spirit, accompanying our Words,---this is expressly declared in Scripture. But such Assistance from God will in vain be expected, when any Thing

• Thing beside this Gospel, in some of its principal Branches; is preached, for the Promise expressly runs thus, *that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in my Name, and lo ! I am always with you, even unto the End of the World.*

And lastly, We must preach Christ crucified, because there are the clearest Testimonies in the Word of God, that by this Preaching the Kingdom of God, and of Righteousness shall be established.---Thus in that most ancient Prophecy of Jesus. Gen. xlix. 10. We read *that to him shall the Gathering of the People be.* In Isaiah, *that there shall be Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign of the People, i. e. in preaching him in his Offices, Men shall enlist into his Service, and fight under his Banner.* And again, by the same Prophet, chap. lv. ver. 4. We hear, God the Father declaring, *Behold I have given him for a Witness to the People, a Leader and Commander to the People.* And to add no more Testimonies, when that long-wished for, most gracious and most halloved Time shall come, when Wars shall cease, and Men shall no more hurt and destroy upon Earth---the only Means that is

is to bring about such a divine Change in the Temper and Spirit of Mankind, is *the Knowledge of the Lord. i. e. of his Person, his Office, his Glory, and his Love. The Earth shall be filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea, Isa. xi. 9.* This amazing Reformation is to be accomplished, I say, when the Angel, as is expressly prophesied, Rev. xiv. 6. *shall fly in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the Earth, and to them of every Nation, Kindred, and Tongue.*

Whenever, therefore, we lose Sight of the Gospel by preaching in a Manner, that does not either lead our Hearers to see their Want of Christ crucified, or to desire to receive this Doctrine more effectually, and become more practically subject unto it; we cease to be Workers together with God,---We have no Promise of his Holy Spirit to make our Endeavours prosper, nor do we declare the Truth which alone can reach the Disease of sinful and corrupt Nature, *the Truth which alone can sanctify the Heart.*

Notwithstanding, therefore, any Severity of Censure and Opposition, we must

must preach Christ crucified, and determine to know nothing else amongst our People. Since it is by this Doctrine alone, Glory is given to God in the highest; his exceeding great Love in the Redemption of Sinners by Christ Jesus magnified; and that humble, universal Obedience, which *makes meet for an Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, established upon a sure Foundation.

May the Doctrine, therefore, of Christ crucified in all its Parts, ever be the chief Subject of our Sermons, and every moral Duty be enforced, as connected with it. By this Means, we may hope, God will send a gracious Rain upon his Inheritance, and together with the Teaching and Preaching Jesus Christ in every Place, many Souls will be added to the Church, even such, as by patient Continuance in all Well-doing, shall be saved.

S E R M O N II.

The Knowledge of Sin by the Law.

ROM. vii. 9.

For I was alive without the Law once, but when the Commandment came, Sin revived and I died.

WHATEVER is Personal strikes the Mind with peculiar Force, and we conceive Truth the more strongly, when it stands bodied forth as it were, in some Character.

The infinitely gracious God has adapted his Manner of Instruction to our Frame in this Respect. He has exemplified the genuine Properties and Effects of Repentance in David: The immediate Pardon of the most Profligate, when they repent and believe on Christ, in the Woman that was a Sinner, and in one of the crucified Thieves. And to mention no more Instances, the Over-throw

throw of Self-Righteousness in the illustrious Apostle St. Paul.

In many Places of Scripture, we are warned against this flattering, yet deadly Error, and assured it will end in utter Rejection from God. But in order to fix the Impression still deeper, an Apostle, distinguished by the very early Sanctity of his Manners, and religious Zeal, leaves upon Record a Confession of the Complacency he took in his own fancied Virtue as his Security, and the Means by which this Mistake was discovered to him. *I was alive, &c.*

The Design, I apprehend, of these Words, was to teach us, the false Thoughts Man naturally entertains of his State towards God---the Way by which he is brought to the Knowledge of his real Condition: And the great Change which that Knowledge, necessarily produces in his Opinion of himself.

The Thoughts every Man naturally entertains of his State towards God, are these---that through the Mercifulness of his Maker to human Frailty, added to the Consideration of some good Actions and Qualities on his own Part, he is alive, i. e.

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entitled to the Blessing of Life and Salvation. This Persuasion, the Offspring of inordinate Selfishness and Pride, is found even amongst those, whose Sins go before them to Judgment. Fornicators, Drunkards, Liars, and unjust Persons, greatly pacify their Consciences, by supposing the Good that is in them, will qualify their Iniquity, and plead powerfully in their behalf.

Now if these enormous Sinners, can fancy themselves, even whilst continuing in their Trespases, Objects entitled to the pardoning Mercy of God: No Wonder, that Men of Sobriety, and of good Morals, in the Judgment of their selfish fellow Creatures, vehemently justify themselves, and bid Defiance to the Condemnation of God's Law. But above all, if to the habitual Practice of social Duties, the Practice of Devotion also is added, in such a Case, the Presumption of being absolutely out of the Reach of all Condemnation, rises to its greatest Height.

Yet observe, it was in this very State of moral, religious Practice, that St. Paul says of himself, *I was alive without the Law once---* I was quite secure, that my

own personal Virtue gave me a Title to the Favour of God. But all this, was a miserable Delusion---Such a proud Conceit could have had no Place in my Mind for a Moment, had I not been without the Law, i. e. an utter Stranger to its Demands. I knew not, that it takes Cognizance of the very Thoughts and Desires of the Heart, exacting inward and spiritual Holiness, no less than outward Obedience, and annexes Death, as the Wages of every Transgression against it. I knew not that the Law, will accept of nothing from the Sinner after the Commission, even of a single Fault: But still inexorable to all Endeavours to obtain its Favour, denounces this dreadful Doom, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things, written in the Book of this Law, to do them,* Gal. iii. 10.

Thus was gross Ignorance of the unchangeable Law of God, the Ground of St. Paul's Security, and Self-Satisfaction. The same Ignorance remains still in you, if you say, there is no Condemnation against you in the Law. Your Confidence arises from the impious Persuasion that a slight, partial, interrupted Obedience, will suffice. Therefore the same Means which
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were necessary to bring the great Apostle out of such a Delusion, to the Knowledge of himself, as a Sinner, are equally needful for you, namely, the Explanation of the Law of God, and the Application of it to your Heart.

I was alive, saith the Apostle, once without the Law, but when the Commandment came, Sin revived and I died. The Commandment is here beautifully represented as the Officer of God pursuing, and at length apprehending the Sinner. By multiplicity of Business and worldly Care, by an incessant Engagement in sinful Pleasures, or through Blindness of Mind and Self-Conceit, it is possible, it is most easy, to hide your Soul, as it were, from the Pursuit of God's Law, and so remain quite undisturbed about its Accusations. But whenever the Commandment, through the Grace of God, comes with Power; when its Nature, and Extent, and Sanction are understood, Sin revives. This the Apostle found to be the Case with himself. *Sin revived and I died*, saith he. It set upon him with fresh Strength. Long had he looked upon it like a vanquished Enemy, utterly disarmed, by his supposed Innocence, and Religion, of all Power

Power to hurt him. Yet, *when the Commandment came Sin revived*; it alarmed his Conscience with a tormenting Sense of his being still under the Curse of the Law. Behold! what an unexpected, heart-afflicting Change! Sin became strong and irresistible in its Charges and Accusations against him. And the Apostle, though long before, full of Self-Confidence, could now no more imagine himself Righteous, nor support his Pretensions to Life, by the Law. A Sentence of Death incurred by Disobedience to it, he felt in his Heart. Thus Sin revived, and St. Paul died.

It is remarkable, that the Apostle says, not the Commandments in the plural Number, but the Commandment in the singular. This is with Design to teach you, that the Transgression of any one Commandment, brings upon you the Curse of the Law: And that every one of the Commandments hath such a high Demand of perfect Obedience, that whenever you understand it, Sin must revive, and you die before it.

This is a Truth fundamental to all sincere Faith in the Lamb of God, and to all abiding Humbleness of Mind. But alas! it is a Truth, seldom meeting with

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that Fulness of Assent, its vast Importance demands.

I shall prove, therefore, that you, and every mere Man, born into this World have broken every one of GOD's Commandments.

The first Commandment you suppose, it is most probable, only requires you to renounce all Prayer to, and Dependance for Help upon, the Gods of the Heathen World, and therefore can boldly say, you have none other but Jehovah for your GOD.---But if you search the Scriptures, you will find, *every covetous Man is branded with the Name of Idolater*, Eph. v. 5. and that of every sensual Person it is expressly said, *his Belly is his GOD*, Phil. iii. 19. therefore, according to this Rule of Interpretation, whatever engages the Affections of your Heart, and is the *principal* Object of your Delight, that Thing, or Creature is your GOD. Now have you never loved, never delighted in carnal Pleasure, Esteem, or Riches, Comforts, and temporal Blessings more than in GOD? Have you always in Thought, Word, and Deed, without Failure or Defect expressed supreme, unrivalled Love to GOD? unless you can affirm all this with Truth of yourself, you are

are a Sinner against the first Commandment.

The second obliges you, in the Letter, to detest Pagan and Popish Images, the bowing the Knee before the pictur'd Saint, or wonder-working Crucifix, as Instruments of Blessing, or Objects of Worship in any Degree. And so far, if a Protestant, you are guiltless.---But attend to the Spirit and Intention of this Law, then you will perceive it equally condemns all Hypocrisy, and Formality in the Worship of the true GOD. Since it is hard to say, which is most absurd and sinful, to worship the Work of your own Hands, Wood, and Stone, or to treat the living and true GOD, as if he were no more than a dumb Idol. And yet so often have you done this, as you have said in Prayer the Thing you never meant, perhaps never understood; so often as you have pretended to desire, what was indeed the Aversion of an unconverted Heart.

The third Commandment forbids all rash and common Swearing, all speaking reproachfully of GOD, his Ordinances, and his Scriptures. Nay further, the Lord Jesus Christ interprets it, to condemn every Thing

in your common Conversation, more than simple Affirmation, and Denial, Mat. v. 37. If you have therefore trifled with the Word of God yourself, or laughed at the witty profane Jests of others; if in the Emotions of Passion, or vehement Desire to establish your Assertions, you have ever sworn by Heaven, or your own Life, much more, if you have sworn by your Maker; (and who dare say nothing of this Kind is chargeable upon him) then it is manifest you are a Transgressor of this Law.

The Demands of the fourth Commandment the glorious God has fully explained, Isa. lviii. 13. *You are not to do your own Ways*, by exercising your Trade as the Love of Money will tempt you. *Nor find your own Pleasure*, by making the Sabbath a Day for Recreation and Amusement. *Nor speak your own Words*, by discoursing on worldly Subjects, which on another Day have a just Claim to your Attention.

Thus far you are taught, what you must refrain from, lest you profane the Lord's Sabbath. The positive Part of your Duty is thus expressed. *You shall call the Sabbath a Delight*, rejoicing in it, as a most gracious Opportunity of meditating on God,
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his Son, his Promises and Salvation. Further you must account it the *Holy of the Lord*. No politick Device of Man to keep the Multitude in Awe, but set apart by the Appointment of the Lord himself. You must account it *honourable* too, *i. e.* most nobly exalted above all other Days, by being consecrated to the more abundant and publick Worship of the Father everlasting. Thus extensive is the Demand of the fourth Commandment, God himself being the Interpreter of its Meaning. Look back now upon your Manner of Keeping the Lord's Sabbaths from your Youth up.---Doth not Conviction flash in your Face? Doth not Conscience accuse you of innumerable Profanations? That instead of giving up yourself to Prayer, to reading God's Word, and to Christian Discourse, you have thought the Duty of the Sabbath discharged, by appearing twice at Church. Even granting you are an early Convert to the Truth and Power of Godliness, can you acquit yourself, of having never offended, and polluted the Sabbaths of the Lord, by unprofitable, worldly Discourse?

The fifth Commandment obliges you to avoid every Thing which might cause just Grief to your Parents, to do every Thing that can demonstrate your Reverence for them, as the Instruments, under God, of your Life, and the Means of your Preservation. But dare you venture to put your Title to eternal Life on this Issue, that in every Time and Place, whether your Parents were present or absent, you have given to them, and to all their reasonable Commands, the Honour due unto them from the Grant of God? Have you never been stubborn, and unruly to their Grief and Vexation? Never laughed at their Infirmities, or secretly despised them for being subject to them? Nay, if you were to inherit their Possessions, have you not wished at Times, their Decease, that you might have more abundant Gratification for yourself? If in one of these Points you are found guilty, you stand condemned by this Law.

With Respect to the two following Commandments, you conclude (if you know not the Law) that you are able to plead perfect Innocence. I hear you, methinks, saying, What? must I believe a Lie? must I
confess

confess myself a Murderer and Adulterer? Not all the Teachers in the World shall persuade me that I am so wicked and sinful, as to stand within the Accusation of either of these Commandments. No human Authority, I grant you, is sufficient. Therefore your violent Resistance against any Charge of Guilt as a Transgressor of these Commandments is fully provided against, and you are brought into this great Difficulty; either you must make the Lord and Judge of the whole Earth a Teacher of Falshood, or prove before God, that your Heart never harboured one wrathful, or one unclean Desire. For this is the decisive Sentence, he gave in the Point before us, to undeceive those who had abridged the Commandments of God, as if designed to condemn and punish only the *overt Acts* of Sin. *Ye have heard that it was said of old Time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in Danger of the Judgment,* Mat. v. 21. From hence you conclude there can be no Breach of this Commandment till wilful Murder is committed. *But I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his Brother, i. e.* so as to feel the Emotions of Malice and Resentment

against him, *without a Cause*, through Selfishness and Passion, *shall be in Danger of the Judgment*. In Agreement with his Divine Master, St. John is bold to say, *Who-soever hateth his Brother, is a Murderer*, 1 John iii. 15. the Nature of his malignant Spirit is such, that were it left to take its own Course, it would as surely carry *Him* on to actual Murder, as the very same Spirit hath already, thousands of most unhappy Criminals.

Now are you clear in this Matter? Have you never been transported with Wrath, to strike or take your Brother by the Throat, as the Avenger of your own Quarrel? Never been provok'd to Cursing and Rail-ing? Has no personal Hatred against some Rival, in the Thing you covet, rested in your Bosom? No Resentment on Account of some real or fancied Injury? Beyond Example great, is your Innocence; if in each of these Particulars, you can answer with a good Conscience, not once guilty in the whole Course of your Life. On the Contrary, if you have offended ever so little in any of these Points, you are fallen under the Condemnation of the Law.

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No less spiritual, is the *Divine* Interpretation of the seventh Commandment. *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old Time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery.* And suppose by this, all open and gross Acts of Lewdness only are forbidden. But I say unto you, *Whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath already committed Adultery with her in his Heart.* The genuine Purport of the Law was to purify the Thoughts of the Heart. So that the very beholding the Face of Beauty with loose Desire, constitutes you that Moment guilty of Adultery in your Heart before GOD; whose Judgment is according to Truth. Guilty of Adultery, though through Want of Opportunity, regard to Character, or restraining Grace, the Defilement of your Soul, was visible only to the All-seeing Eye.

Little need be said to prove you a Sinner against this Commandment. Since where is the human Heart that never dwelt on the Picture drawn by a wanton Imagination? Never took secret Pleasure, from indulging in itself, or exciting in others impure Ideas? Yet nothing more than this mental
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Uncleanness is needful to prove you a Transgressor of this Law.

By the eighth Commandment you are forbid to take away, or to detain the Property of another, and to withhold any Thing from Men, which is their Due. A Servant or Apprentice *steals* from his Master his Time and Labour by Idleness and wilful Negligence. A Man in Trade and Merchandize, when by any Methods however commonly practiced, or esteemed fair, he imposes upon the Ignorance or Necessity of others, lends them Money at unreasonable Rates, or borrows what he cannot reasonably hope to pay again, is dishonest; and with great Truth may be said to *steal*. And according to the same equitable Rule of Interpretation, whoever withholds the Payment of that Debt which never can be cancelled, the Debt of Love unfeigned to every one; by so doing he defrauds his Neighbour of something greatly valuable, of something to which his Neighbour has as an undeniable a Claim, as to any Part of his worldly Property. Since the Law of God strictly charges, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself*. Unless therefore you have the Testimony of your Conscience, that

that you have never been cold and careless about the Welfare of others: Never without an active Desire to do your uttermost for the Benefit of those about you, in Body and Soul: You come within the Condemnation of this Law, you feloniously detain from your Neighbour, that tender Affection you owe him, and which his Circumstances require; and therefore you stand chargeable with spiritual *Theft*.

The ninth Commandment forbids, together with the Heaven-daring Sin of Perjury, all the Unruliness and Iniquity of the Tongue; every Species of Lying and Slander; the advancing or affirming any Thing detrimental to the Character of another, which is not absolutely Fact. For in every one of these Instances you are guilty of bearing *false Witness against your Neighbour*. Unless, therefore, you can prove, your Tongue never propagated Defamation and Scandal; never put any additional Aggravations on a Matter of Fact; never yielded to that all-conquering Sin of Evil-speaking; unless you can prove this, you have Indeed, and in Truth, bore false Witness against your Neighbour.

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The last Commandment condemns every envious: With, excited by the Prosperity of others, and the very Desire also of those Enjoyments, which you see them possessing. St. Paul, speaking expressly of this Commandment, saith, *I had not known Lust, except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet,* Rom. vii. 7. *i. e.* I never should have apprehended, that the mere simple Wishing for the Conveniencies and Comforts, bestowed on those about me; though without any Design or Desire to obtain them by Force or Fraud,---in this, I should not have apprehended there could be any Sin; if the tenth Commandment had not said, *Thou shalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife, nor his Servant, nor his Maid, nor his Ox, nor his Ass, nor any Thing that is his.*

Need I stay to convince you that you are a Sinner against this Law? That you have indulged innumerable Wishes in your Heart after those outward Advantages which the Providence of God hath given more liberally to others, than to yourself? Now in so doing, you stand arraigned and condemned by this Law.

From this Explanation of the Meaning of the Commandments, it must be now manifest

manifest to you, that you have been guilty of a breach of them *all*, not once or twice only, but by a thousand, a million Offences. You cannot deny this, unless you prove the Explanation of the Commandments, above given, to be a forced and fanciful One. But this you cannot do, because that Explanation stands supported and confirmed by this Testimony of Scripture. *We know the Law is SPIRITUAL. i. e.* Reaches to the very Intentions and Desires of the Heart. Rom. vii. 14. By the Lord's own Rule of interpreting the Commandments which forbid Murder and Adultery: And by his express Assertion, that the full Force and Meaning of the Moral Law contained in the Ten Commandments, is briefly comprehended *in loving GOD with all your Heart, and with all your Soul, and with all your Strength, and your Neighbour as your self.* Mat. xxii. 40.

By necessary Consequence, if every Action of your Life, every Temper of your Mind, every Desire and Thought of your Heart, doth not demonstrate your perfect Love to GOD, and Man; then without any straining the Sense of the Commandments, without having recourse to any Human Interpretation of their Meaning, you stand

stand condemned by every one of them. Condemned to Death Eternal, which is the Wages of every Sin. Because each of these Commandments in the Name and Authority of that one Law-Giver, *who is able to save and to destroy*. James iv. 12. exacts of you sinless Obedience, and that continually, and in Failure of such Obedience the Destruction of your Soul.

Upon these Accounts the Law is called in the Scriptures of G O D, by these alarming and most dismaying Names: T H E M I N I S T R A T I O N O F D E A T H. 2 Cor. iii. 7. *The S T R E N G T H of S I N.* 1 Cor. xv. 56. The Ministration of Death, because it delivers over to eternal Misery, every Offender against it: The Strength of Sin as it gives that accursed Thing, a Power from which no Man by his own Efforts can get free, to accuse, condemn, and torment the Soul. And that it is the Moral Law, the Eternal Rule of Good and Evil, to which as reasonable Creatures we are accountable, which is thus dreadful, when its Demands and Sanction are understood, is proved by another Scripture. *Now we know that what Things the Law saith, it saith to them who are*
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under the Law, That every Mouth may be stopped, and all the World may become GUILTY before God. Rom. iii. 19.

From what has been offered, it is manifest, that by the Works of the Law, no Flesh can be justified. Therefore, tho' you may have been, as I would charitably hope you have been, ever outwardly an Observer of the Law, and a Companion of those that fear G O D : Beware, I beseech you, that you are not blinded thro' Self-Love, and puffed up with the Conceit of your own Innocence. The Commandment of God, you see, is exceeding broad. Honestly compare all your Actions, Tempers, and Desires with it, then you will see Cause to cry out with those whose Iniquities have been far more glaring, G O D *be merciful to me a Sinner. O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from this Body of Death.*

Nothing but gross Ignorance of God's Law, can leave you the least Ground to value your self upon your own Personal Virtue. This indeed will totally hide from you your Transgressions, or suffer them to appear only as the Stars in a cloudy Night, here and there one, at a great Distance from each other, and those only of the first Magnitude.

nitude. *By the Law is the Knowledge of Sin.* Rom. iii. 20. acquaint yourself with it, and you will immediately behold your Sins like the Stars of Heaven in the Mid-Night Frost, when their Multitude bespangles the whole Firmament.

For though your Character is not stained with any Sins of a deep Die, though you are highly esteemed by the World, no less than by yourself. Are you, think you, better than the most distinguished Apostle was, when the Commandment came, and *He judged Himself worthy of eternal Death, before it? Are you Just and Sober, so was He? Devout and Zealous? Concerning Zeal, says He of Himself persecuting the Church.* Phil. iii. 6. Is your Behaviour blameless before Men? Even Malice and Envy were forced to be silent, or acknowledge of Him, that according to the strictest Sect of their Religion, He had lived a Pharisee.

Nevertheless when presuming on no better Righteousness than this, to procure his acceptance with God, *I was alive saith He, without the Law.* The Law gave me no Cause to cry to myself, Peace and Safety. It denounced nothing but Condemnation. I was even then held accursed by it. If then, all this
Virtue

Virtue would still have left St. Paul a lost Sinner, whether is greatest, your Folly or your Provocation of God, to trust in your Obedience and Goodness; though evidently less perfect.

Wherefore then, you will say, serveth the Law? since by obeying it as well as I am able, I can never be accounted righteous before it. One principal End for which it was given, was this; saith the Word of God, --- *That Sin might appear to be Sin; and by the Commandment become exceeding sinful*, Rom. vii. 13. that Sin might be known to be desperately evil, from its bitter Opposition and Contrariety to the Commandment, which in its full Extent is Holy, Just, and Good. And big also with Ruin and Destruction, because after the Commission of it in any Degree, the Law will not accept of any thing by Way of Amends and Reparation from the Hands of the Sinner. And so from this Discovery of the Nature of Sin, you might admire the Glory of Redemption, and feel your own absolute Need of it. This Truth is confirmed by the reasoning which the great Apostle uses, Gal. iii. 21. 22. If there had been a *Law* which could have given

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Life, *i. e.* By Mans Obedience performed to it, --- *Verily Righteousness should have been by the Law*, then the Pardon and Justification of Sinners should have stood upon this Plea, of a perfect Obedience to it. But the Scripture hath concluded (*συνελεισεν*) all under Sin, hath shut up every fallen Creature, as in a Prison, under a Sentence of Condemnation, and an utter Impossibility either of making Satisfaction for past Offences, or of obtaining Acceptance with God by his own Obedience, defective and interrupted as it ever will be. By his *Law*, God hath rendered every Way of approaching Him in Peace and Favour impossible, but thro' the one *Mediator*; that the Promise by Faith of Jesus Christ, (which Promise is Eternal Life) might be given to them that believe.

Now it is the full and lively Persuasion of your Mind concerning this Truth, it is a clear Conviction of the miserable Defects in your best Duties, and best Tempers, when compared with what the Law exacts from you, joined with an Acknowledgment that the great G O D, is neither cruel, nor severe, in annexing the Penalty of Eternal Death to every Transgression against his
Holy

S E R M O N II.

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Holy Law, --- it is this Persuasion and Acknowledgment which alone can prepare your Heart for the Benefits of Redemption, or give you an Understanding to see the Want of it. Whilst you remain alive without the Law you may give your Assent to the Truth as it is in Jesus, and have some sort of implicit Veneration for it, the Fruit of Education. But still your Thoughts and Apprehensions of the infinitely glorious Saviour, must necessarily be few, and mean, and unaffecting, till Sin hath slain you by the Commandment, --- because till then you must over-rate your own Virtues, the good Things you have done, or intend to do, and in Part at least confide in them, as able to save your Soul.

On the contrary, when you see how much every Commandment of G O D, demands of you more than you have ever performed, and that when Judgment is laid to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plumbet, not a single Character (G O D manifest in the Flesh excepted) can escape Condemnation. When your deaf Ears, deaf thro' the Pride and Love of Sin, are opened, and you hear the Accusations of the Law against your Soul, waxing louder and louder

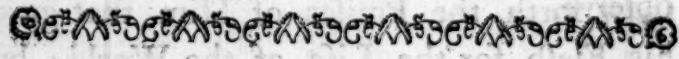
like the Sound of the Trumpet on the Mount: When you understand that the Law of God, inexorable and infinitely jealous, will accept nothing which you can perform or promise, for Righteousness; in these Circumstances great will be your Joy, to hear Him that speaketh from Heaven, and faith with God-like Mercy to self-destroyed Sinners, *Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13. You will give Thanks and sing with the Multitude of the Heavenly Host, *Glory to God in the highest, on Earth, Peace, Good-will towards Men.* Luke ii. 11. *For unto us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* The more you know of your own Heart and Life, by comparing it with the Demands of God's Eternal Law, in the stronger Light will you perceive how infinitely great your Obligations are to Christ, *Who is the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believeth.* Rom. x. 4. Through whom you are able to say, I am not under the Law, but under Grace. The Love of Christ, as your great Deliverer, will constrain you, to have Respect to all his Commandments, and to present yourself a living Sacrifice
unto

unto God, which is your reasonable Service. It will constrain you, because you thus judge, *That if one died for all, then were all dead, dead as Transgressors of the Law.* 2 Cor. v. 14. and that He died for all, that they which live should not from henceforth live unto themselves, most blasphemously making Christ the Minister of Sin, but unto Him, that died for them and rose again, doing all that lieth in them, to shew forth the Praises of Him that gave his Flesh for the Life of the World; by adding to their Faith, the Practice of all Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth.



S E R M O N III.

The Necessity of Maintaining a
good Conscience; and its full
Extent.



ACTS xxiv. 16.

*Herein do I exercise myself to have always
a Conscience void of Offence toward God
and toward Man.*

T H E R E shone united in St. Paul,
after his Conversion, the most ar-
dent Zeal to exalt the adoreable Name of
Christ, and the greatest Care to walk
worthy of his Grace. Constrained by the
former, He cries out, *God forbid, that I
should glory save in the Cross of our Lord
Jesus Christ.* Influenced no less powerfully
by the latter. *Herein do I exercise myself, &c.*
And

And were we to trace the Steps of this illustrious Man, from his Conversion to his Departure out of Life, it were easy to make it appear, that He faithfully conformed to this excellent Rule. But it will be more for our Instruction, to consider the Text, not as peculiar to St. Paul, but as describing the constant Practice of every one who *Loves the Lord Jesus in Sincerity*. By considering it in this Light, we may observe.

I. The Necessity that lays upon us, to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Man.

II. That this good Conscience, consists in a sincere Conformity to the Will of God.

III. That to maintain and preserve it, requires diligent Application, and much Labour.

I. The Necessity that is laid upon us, to have always a Conscience void of Offence, is evident, from the Nature of that Power and Faculty of the Soul, called Conscience. It is this which enables us to reflect upon all that we do; and either accuses or excuses, acquits or condemns us, for obeying or opposing the Rule of our Duty.

From whence it is clear, that Man is indued with Conscience, and enjoys the high Priviledge of this Faculty, in order that its Authority should always be respected, and its Admonitions most obsequiously complied with. Where this is not the Case, the Power of Conscience gradually grows weaker; and by repeated Violence offered to it, like some abused, insulted Friend, withdraws itself, leaving you to follow your own Lusts without check, or controul; a Condition the most dreadful you can fall into, on this Side the Misery of Hell, and to which it directly leads. So that if the Authority of Conscience is to be preserved at all, it is absolutely Necessary to have it always without Offence; because by shewing Contempt to its Suggestions in any Instance, you take a sure Method to weaken its Influence; and throw yourself more and more out of the Reach of its salutary Rebukes. How dangerous and deplorable a Situation this is to live in, you will understand; when you shall have duly considered, that whatever G O D Himself has taught or required from us, effectually works on the Mind, only through the Authority of Conscience: And He who governs

governs in the Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth, by his Providence, rules and directs each Individual amongst us by the Ministry of Conscience. The Lord said unto Moses, *See! I have made thee a God to Pharoah.* Ex. vii. 1. *I have appointed thee to declare to Him my Laws, to require the Execution of them in my Name, and to inflict Punishment when he sets them at Nought.* Now GOD has intrusted a Commission of the same Kind, with your Conscience. He has commanded it to inforce Respect to all his Laws, by the Severity of its Rebukes, upon wilful Trangression; by the Frequency of its Admonitions; and by the solid Peace it allows you, to possess your Soul in, when you are careful to reverence your Conscience. By necessary Consequence then, if instead of constantly exercising yourself, to have all your Designs, Tempers, and Actions, so modelled by the Word of GOD, that your Conscience may have no Authority from thence, to alarm, or reproach you, for violating your Duty. If instead of this necessary Care, you no longer regard the Admonitions of Conscience, nor *seek Power* to turn from your evil

evil Ways at its Reproof; then every Step you take, and every Day you live, you are getting farther from God, and nearer to Perdition. For as our merciful Creator and Preserver hath placed Fences round the Body, to secure its Health and Safety, teaching us by painful Feelings, what is hurtful and destructive; and as every one who breaks through these Fences is an Enemy to his own natural Life, and hastens the Pace of Death. In like Manner, by not hearkening to the Voice of Conscience, you are an Enemy to your immortal Soul, and deliver it up to eternal Ruin; for it is not more necessary that the Feeling of the Senses should be regarded, to preserve your Body from Disease and Danger, than that the Rebukes and Admonitions of Conscience, should be most respectfully attended to, to preserve your Soul,

What then must become of you, if you get the Mastery over Conscience? You must from that Hour walk on in Darkness, and though all your Life is Sin, and you are only *Treasuring up for yourself Wrath, against the Day of Wrath*. You will be too blind to perceive the Evil of Practices, which once you held in utter Abhorrence,
and

and too deaf to hear even the loud Thunder of God's Law, though pointed directly against you ; though continually denouncing the Miseries that are coming upon you.

But supposing your Conscience is not past Feeling, unless, you are careful to have it void of Offence, it will punish you with frequent Disgust and inward Vexation. It will make you uneasy when much alone; abject in Adversity; and fearful even to Distress, when Disease and Sickness, seem commissioned to apprehend you, and carry you to Judgment. In these Circumstances, from which you are never secure, an evil Conscience, unless feared as it were with an hot Iron, will trouble you with an aching Pain, which neither Friends, nor Riches can assuage. In these Circumstances, a Variety of afflicting Thoughts, croud in upon the Minds of all who have not been exercised in maintaining a good Conscience. Forgetfulness of God, carelessness about Salvation, many Omissions and many Disobediences never lamented, never brought to be washed away by the Blood of that immaculate Lamb, slain to take

take away Sin, severely punish even here, the careless Trifler with his Conscience.

The Conclusion, therefore, is evident, that if you would not be given up to a Reprobate Mind, nor carry about you, Matter of perpetual Quarrel with yourself, if you would be fortified against the Assaults of Adversity, and the Fears of Death, then there is an absolute Necessity that you exercise yourself to have always a Conscience void of Offence.

II. But such a Conscience, I observe in the Second Place, cannot be attained, without a constant Performance of the Duties we owe to God and Man. It is very afflicting to consider how our Hearts are bent to Deceit and Falshood in this Respect. And when we cannot shake off the Authority of Conscience, how artfully we put some principal Part, for the Whole of Religion. Thus some have much Zeal for the Purity of Scripture Doctrines, and with earnestness contend for the Faith, once delivered to the Saints, but alas! as if this alone was sufficient, they are careless and luke-warm, if not offensive and scandalous in Life and Conversation. Others, on the Contrary, believe an honest Man to be

be the noblest Work of God ; and with sovereign Contempt, leave all that is properly Religion, as the Province set apart for the weak in Judgment, and the enthusiastic in Temper. But neither of these can be put asunder, and exist seperately without making Ship-wreck of Faith and a good Conscience.

You make it an inviolable Rule to be faithful to your Word and Promise, pitiful to the Poor, kind and courteous to all.--- Thus far your Conscience is void of that Offence towards Men, which is chargeable on the Extortioner, and unjust Person ; you are free also from that particular Guilt, which lays upon the ⁿUnmerciful and Inhuman.----But if you have a Conscience void of Offence in no farther Degree than this, it still remains, unless past feeling, full of Offence towards God. For unless you come before Him daily as a Sinner, begging for Mercy, as one redeemed by the Blood of his dear Son.----Unless you seek Salvation, and approach unto God, by Him. *Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; without whom no Man cometh to the Father.* Unless you pray and read the Scriptures, making Conscience of these Things, no less
than

than of being upright, sober, and humane; you are inexcusably guilty before God; for your Contempt or Neglect of a devout and Holy Spirit. For, are you not indebted to God alone for your Existence? Is not every Comfort you feel, the Effect of his mere Bounty? Are not all your Capacities for Happiness his free Gift? Do not these Things, and above all his Love, which *sent his only begotten Son into the World, to the End, that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting Life, --- do not these Things require suitable Acknowledgements.*

Suppose you are a perfect Example of Beneficence, Magnanimity, Temperance, and Justice towards Men, which is the utmost you can affirm of yourself. Is it not as much your Duty to be just to the blessed God, as to your Fellow-Creatures? Or, is He the only Being you may overlook without any Injustice, or neglect without any moral Guilt? Ridiculous is it, to affect a delicate Sense of Honour, and value yourself upon your good Qualifications with Respect to Men; whilst you, by your Profaneness, rob God of the Honour due unto his Name, his Son, and his Gospel. Ridiculous, as their boasting themselves Just, who

who punctually pay their Losses at the Gaming-Table, whilst they are deaf to the Solicitation of honest Creditors. No Sin of a deeper Dye can be laid to your Charge, than this, That you confide in *a Morality; Independent of God*----*which hath neither his Love for its Root, nor his Glory for its Aim*----That you preposterously set the Creature above the Creator; and out of a Regard to Man, either real or pretended, treat the Lord God Almighty, as if he was beneath your Notice, and the only Cypher in the World. Granting, therefore, that you do discharge all the Duties of the social Character, still if you do no more, your Conscience is full of Offence toward God.

Again, on the other Hand, you may be amongst the few who give Glory to God for *sending Redemption to his People, and commanding his Covenant for ever*.---You maintain, as the Scriptures teach you, that Salvation is *by Grace, through Faith, and that not of Ourselves, it is the Gift of God not of Works, least any Man should boast*. You are a diligent Hearer of those who preach not themselves but Christ Jesus the Lord.--You are constant in the Exercises of Prayer and Praise to
 God

GOD--in your Closet and your Family.---So far, all is well; your Conscience is void of that Offence towards God, which the Careless and Profane incur.---But then, if you are not to be trusted in the Dark; if Deceit and Guile have Rule in your Heart; if you are enslaved by Envy or Covetousness, or Malice; if you are a tyrannical Master, a bad Husband, or an Eye-servant, it is certain you cannot have a Conscience void of Offence towards Men.---Your Faith, in this Case, is lifeless Opinion; your Religion an empty Phantom. *For if any Man, saith the Apostle St. James i. 26. among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, this Man's Religion is vain: i. e.* Whoever can take the Liberty of speaking Evil of others, blackening their Characters, and publishing their Faults with Pleasure; though his Heart may swell with the Fervour of Devotion, and melt at the Mention of redeeming Love, still all is empty and delusive. For observe, the Apostle doth not say, a Man of this Character, offends and wounds Religion; but that his Religion is vain, it is an Abuse of Language to call it by that Name; for without unfeigned Love to Men, and the Practice

Practice of all Sincerity and Honesty toward them; to imagine, the exalting Christ, will atone for bad Tempers, or cover bad Practices, is no less despising the Word of God, and his express Command, than if, like a Heathen, you trusted to your moral Honesty; and counted the Blood of the Covenant, an unholy Thing. Nay, however, you may be surprized to hear it, a Scoffer that laughs at Faith, and nauseates every Appearance of Devotion, is scarce farther from Heaven and Salvation, than you, yourself, who are shocked at his blasphemous Impiety, and yet under the Use of the Means of Grace, and the Profession of Godliness, art void of a conscientious Behaviour toward all Men with whom you have to do. For if any Temper hateful to God, or any Practice plainly forbidden, is persisted in by you, it matters but very little, whether Hypocrisy or Profaneness makes the Choice. Whether you endeavour to excuse your Contempt of God, by a pretended Zeal for Honour, Justice and Benevolence, or by a Zeal, no less pretended, for the Gospel and Glory of God. In neither Case, can there be any Sincerity, or good Conscience; for then due Regard

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would be had both to God and Man. Faith would work by Love, and make the whole Conduct beautifully consistent, and such as becomes a Creature and a Sinner.

But besides the Necessity laying upon us, of having a Conscience void of Offence; and in Order to attain this, a Discharge of those Duties we owe both to God and Man. Your Conscience must be constantly clear. *To have always a Conscience void of Offence*, saith the Apostle. Many when they are afflicted by the Hand of God, and pressed sore; and others, affected for a Time by some awakening Discourse, seek to keep a good Conscience: But presently they are disgusted with the strait and narrow Path, and therefore turn back again to their own Wickedness. But the Conscience of every true Believer, is equal and firm. It depends not on Times and Occasions, Distress, or Alarms. Whilst the Resolutions of a bad Conscience, like a Fever, come and go at certain Intervals; a good Conscience, like the Blood circulating in its natural State, is regular and uninterrupted. This will appear plainer, when illustrated by an Example. Hear the Message, Balaam returned to Balak. Num.

xxii. 18. *If Balak would give me his House full of Silver and Gold, I cannot go beyond the Word of the Lord to do more or less.* Was not this an Answer becoming a Prophet of the Lord? Was not he who gave it, a Man of good Conscience? No, What immediately follows, proves the contrary. *Now therefore I pray you, tarry ye also here this Night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more.* He asks longer Time that he may ~~take~~ take the Business again in Hand, in order to find Means of evading the Dictates of his Conscience. In this Practice, Balaam has too many Followers. Not a Day passes, but one is saying to himself, I will defraud no more. Another, restored to active Life from a Chamber of Sickness, is resolved to forsake a Round of Business and Pleasure, which leaves no Time for Self-examination, for Heart-felt Prayer, or for reading with Understanding, the Life-giving Word of God. A Third, sees the Way of the World, must lead to Perdition, unless God denies himself, and falsifies the most solemn Declarations of his own Word. Yet each, drawn on by Love of Gain, or of Pleasure, or deterred through evil Shame, finds out

different Expedients, and a Number of Excuses, to stifle that Grace, and to resist those Workings of Conscience, which would lead them to Repentance.

The true Believer, on the contrary, is stedfast and immoveable, in maintaining the Extent of a good Conscience, against the Tyranny of the World, and its most bewitching Temptations; and in obtaining this glorious Testimony, that with Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, he hath his Conversation in the World, *Not according to fleshly Wisdom, but according to the Will of God.*

III. It must be confessed, thus to persevere in keeping a Conscience void of Offence, requires diligent Application, and much Labour. Lazy Desires, faint Resolutions, and formal Prayers, will never prevail to this great Purpose. No, you must apply yourself with Vigour, and much Attention to it, as the constant, and far most important Business of Life. For in this earnest Manner, St. Paul declares, he was himself engaged. *Herein, says he, do I exercise myself.*----Now this Exercise consists in daily Applications to the Throne
of

of Grace, for Knowledge, Power, and Watchfulness.

First, It consists in daily Applications to the Throne of Grace for Knowledge. Ignorance, which you have no sufficient Means to cure, will never be laid to your Charge: But that Ignorance, which by Prayer, by reading God's Word, and hearing his faithful Ministers, may be certainly removed, is a Sin, and leaves you under a heavy Charge of Guilt, on Account of every Sin you commit through it. Therefore the first Step, in order to have a Conscience void of Offence, is diligent and daily Prayer for Understanding in the Way of Godliness; to be taught by the Spirit of God through his Word, what you know not; to be filled with the Knowledge of his Will. It must be your constant Exercise, every Day, to call upon the Father of all Lights, and the Giver of all Wisdom, saying, *Shew me thy Ways, O Lord, and teach me thy Paths. O lead me forth in thy Truth, and learn me, for thou art the God of my Salvation.* When you have thus continual Recourse to God for Instruction in

Righteousness, you shall never be suffered to wound your Conscience, and fall into Offences, through Want of Light and Direction. For this is the exceeding great and precious Promise which belongs to every such diligent and humble Enquirer. *Gracious and righteous is the Lord, therefore will he teach Sinners in the Way. Them that are meek shall he guide in their Judgment; and such as are gentle, them shall he learn his Way,* Pl. xxv. 8, 9.

Besides this Knowledge, you want Power. In yourself, you have no Strength to withstand any violent Temptation suited to your beloved Lust. You must exercise yourself therefore in imploring Day by Day, that you may Experience what is the exceeding Greatness of Christ's Power towards them that believe. You must earnestly plead for yourself, those Promises, by which God has been pleased to engage himself, to strengthen and uphold your Feet from falling; and to put his Spirit within you, to *cause* you to walk in all his Statutes, and keep all his Judgments and do them, Ezec. xxxvi. 27. And after you have thus committed your Soul with Sincerity to God, and besought his promised Help;

Help; to suppose you shall be prevailed over, and fall into wilful and deliberate Offence, is to deny the Reality and Truth of the Promises of God, and to make him regardless of those, who are desirous, whatever they do, to do all to the Glory of God.

It is true, that after you have received Light and Knowledge, yea Strength and Power, you may afterwards be betrayed into Sin, unless you exercise yourself, in Watchfulness and Circumspection. When you have offered up your Morning Sacrifice, and prayed unto God with a sincere Desire, for his Light to guide you, and his Power to defend you; you will, in consequence of his Promise, be made quick of Understanding in the Fear of the Lord. An exquisite and peculiar Sensibility of Evil will be given you, so that you shall run into no Sin, before a Warning of its Approach is sounded in your Soul; and, as the Scripture expresses it, *You hear a Word behind you, saying this is the Way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right Hand, or when ye turn to the Left,* Isa. xxx. 21. This you will find, even before a Thought conceived in Pride, Un-

charitableness, or loose Desire, can obtain Utterance from your Tongue. Your inward Monitor will silently condemn it in your own Mind. But then, in order to preserve this noble Sensibility of Conscience, you must exercise yourself in attending to the Motions of your own Spirit. You must be sober, *i. e.* self-denied, and vigilant. You must be jealous over yourself, with a Godly Jealousy.

Further, a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Man, cannot be obtained, unless you exercise yourself in opposing the prevailing Manners and Way of the World. This is an Exercise indeed! Yet absolutely needful. Because many grievous Offences pass for Trifles in the Estimate of the World; and what is Abomination before God, is in many Instances well spoken of. Pride, Sensuality, Profaneness, if not grown to a hideous Size, are very consistent with the good Opinion of the World. It requires therefore a very active and constant Exertion of the Power of Faith, to oppose and contradict all that Iniquity which is established in the World, as by a Law: To dare to be singular, in the

in the Employment of your leisure Time, the Use of your Wealth, and the Subjects of your Conversation, as the Scripture rule enjoins. Unless you strive manfully and exercise yourself unto Godliness, your Soul will insensibly be hurt, and your Conscience contract Offence, from yeilding to the favorite Maxims, which wholly govern all, *That know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Lastly, This Exercise consists in mortifying your Members, which are upon the Earth, and dying to the Love of those Things which pervert the Judgment, and are apt to bribe it, not to give a just and true Decision. A Man determined to be rich, great, or distinguished, will strenuously endeavour to reconcile his Duty with his Inclination,---and of course never want some false Gloss to put upon Sentiments or Actions, not to be fairly justified. In such a Case, Conscience like a judge in Court, surrounded by corrupt Counsellors and Witnesses, will be led to pass a false Verdict.

Thus I have gone through each of the Heads proposed, and proved to you, the Necessity laid upon you, to have a Conscience

ence void of Offence; the Extent of it; and the Means which must be used to preserve it.

From hence it is evident, beyond Contradiction, that true Religion is a very different Thing, and infinitely nobler, than what is commonly conceived. It is well, it is absolutely necessary that you should be punctual in secret and publick Prayer, in reading the Scriptures, and receiving the Sacrament: Yet all these Exercises are only Means appointed to attain this great End, *a Conscience always void of Offence.* If you use them with any other View, you turn them into sinful Superstition. If they are not effectual to bring you and keep you in the Possession of this good Conscience, they are Mockery before God. Say not therefore, as a senseless Formalist, I go to Church; I receive the Sacrament; I pray Morning and Evening; therefore I am a good Christian; --- for this is equivocal; it may be, and often is, an absolute Falsehood.---But if you can say, I go to Church, I receive the Sacrament, I pray Morning and Evening, I read the Scriptures; and in these Holy Exercises receive from the God of all Grace, Strength and Power to
have

have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God and toward Man, and therefore I am a Christian altogether, --- this is a Truth not to be gainfayed, a Truth confirmed by every Page of Holy Scripture.

But if true Religion, is neither less nor more than having a Conscience void of Offence, it is certain Religion must be made the Business of your Life. Not so far, as to interrupt your Diligence in Trade or Service, --- but so far as actually to engage much of your Thought and Attention, after the Business of your worldly Profession or Calling is over. A good Conscience can neither be preserved or attained, only by praying for a few Minutes Morning and Night, and by Attendance once a Week on the Worship of God in Publick. It indispensably requires Day by Day, some Time to consider your Actions, Purposes, and Desires, and to compare them with God's Word; some Time to search and ransack a deceitful Heart, to discover what are your principal Defects and Infirmities; and some Time to make Supplication for Pardon and fresh Supplies, to relieve your particular Wants and Necessities. How great therefore, is your Folly
and

and your Sin, if you join with the Multitude in consuming your leisure Hours in vain Amusement, or unprofitable Company; you cannot habitually do this, without giving up that *Exercise* of your Mind, which is absolutely Necessary to keep a Conscience void of Offence. You cannot be engaged in Company, and visiting, as the Fashion of the World requires, and have any Time left for deep and serious Thought. You must necessarily remain in gross Ignorance of God, his Scriptures, and yourself. Dare therefore you must, if you would enjoy a Conscience void of Offence, to be particular in redeeming leisure Time. Remember, it is the Manner in which these important Hours are spent, which makes the Difference between the Foolish and the Wise in the Sight of God. The former lose and waste them in vain Pleasure, and studied Diversion of their Thoughts, from their great and eternal Interest. The latter, with Holy Art, employ them to renew their Strength for the fight of Faith, to discover their own Mistakes, and to increase more and more in the excellent Knowledge of the Things of the Spirit of God.

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S E R M O N IV.

The Nature of the Gospel, and of
Faith in it.

M A R K xvi. 15, 16.

*And he said unto them, go ye into all the
World, and preach the Gospel to every
Creature.*

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be
saved, but He that believeth not shall be
damned.*

AFTER the Lord Jesus Christ, had
lived a sinless Life, by his Obedi-
ence to make many righteous, and to set
before our Eyes a perfect Pattern of Holi-
ness. After he had shed on his Cross the
Blood of Atonement, and rose again from
the Dead to proclaim the Acceptance of
his Sacrifice of Himself; He conversed
forty

forty Days with his chosen Disciples. And at last having given them their great and glorious Commission in the Words of the Text, immediately He ascended into the highest Heavens, and the Clouds received Him out of their Sight.

The Commission itself, bespeaks at once the uncontrollable Efficacy of his Power, the unlimited Good-will, He bore to the Human Race, and the Terms of Salvation common to, and necessary in all, who have the Offer of his Gospel.

This Commission, it must be granted, bespeaks the uncontrollable Power which the Lord Jesus Christ possessed. Because nothing short of such Power was sufficient for the Accomplishment of it. But if this had failed; who with Sense or Reason could ever have placed any Confidence either in his Wisdom or his Might. He said to eleven poor, friendless, unlearned, artless Men, *Go ye into all the World*. Lost as it is, to the Knowledge of the true God; abandoned to the Practice and Love of every Abomination, nay attached by inveterate Custom, to the execrable Worship of Devil-Gods, rendered inviolably sacred by the Tradition of their Fore-Fathers.

thers.---Go ye into all the World, not furnished with carnal Weapons, the Excellency of Speech, or the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom,---not aided by the secular Arm, or countenanced by the Authority of the great and powerful; but simply depending on my promised Presence, and the effectual working of my Spirit. Go ye into all the World and preach the Gospel to every Creature; to every Person young or old, rich or poor, endued with a reasonable Mind, and capable of being the Subject of religious Instruction.

In this Commission does the Saviour appear with a Pre-eminence, transcendently glorious, and altogether peculiar to Himself. For every Prophet, before this last and great One, was content to teach his own Country-Men, and never presumed to engage in the bold Enterprize of proselyting Foreign Lands. Even the Gods of the Gentiles claimed Possession only as it were in their particular Districts, and one presided over this, and another over that Country. Never did it enter into the Heads even of victorious Princes (before the Prince of Peace appeared) to carry their Religion with them; and make their Captives receive

ceive their Mode of Worship; not even by Arms and Violence, much less by Preaching and Instruction.

Indeed Antiochus laboured to compel the Jews to receive the Worship of the Græcian Idolatry.---But this was his peculiar Whim with respect to Israel, for he left all his other Subjects at perfect Liberty to worship their own Gods. Nor did the Roman Power attempt to subvert the Religion of the Jews, though they had made their Country a Province; or even persecute the Christian Faith, till their Jealousy was alarmed, and they plainly saw its Design was to abolish every other Religion, that is, *to destroy the Works of the Devil.*

It cannot be denied therefore, that the Lord Jesus Christ, spoke as never Man spoke, when he gave this marvellous Commission to his Apostles, *Go ye into all the World and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* He alone took upon Himself to be Law-Giver to all People, Nations, and Tongues under Heaven. Because He alone had all Power to enable his Apostles and Ministers to bear his Name before Kings and Princes, and to preserve them unhurt, though in the Furnace of Persecution, till

till they had finished their Testimony. He alone had the Hearts of all Men in his Hand, and therefore *by the mean Things of this World, yea the Things which are not. i. e.* By the weakest and most unlikely Instruments, He could accomplish the whole Counsel of his Will. †

In this Commission also, the unlimited Love of the Lord Jesus Christ to Mankind is no less manifest, than his uncontrollable Power. *Go ye, saith He to his Apostles, unto all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* As if He had said, it is the good Pleasure of my Will, that all in every Nation should have the sincere Offers of my Grace. There is none righteous and good enough, no not one, to attain Salvation by the Works of the Law. That Way of seeking it, will miserably deceive and for ever ruin all that trust to it. And there is none so detestably wicked, no not one, but in my Gospel an all-sufficient Remedy is provided for his Recovery. If any thing can possibly soften the Heart, hardened in the

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Practice

† Whoever has Leisure and Ability to see how fully this Commission was executed may consult, Bishop Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*, Usher's *Antiquities*, and Dr. Newton's 18th Dissertation.

Practice of Sin, and make it appear exceeding sinful; it will be the amazing Truth, that *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the End, that all who believe in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* If any Thing can awaken Attention and earnest Concern for Salvation, in the Careless and Indolent, it must be the affecting Report in my Gospel, of the Multitude of Sorrows, Pains, and Sufferings, my Zeal for their Salvation, led me to endure. And if any Fact can convince the Self-righteous and Self-sufficient, of their Vileness and Danger of eternal Wrath, it must be the solemn Declaration, that, *We all have gone astray, We have turned every one to his own Way, and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us All.*

I charge you therefore lay aside all your national Prejudices, and Jewish Bigotry.---- Preach my Gospel to every Creature; and in order to give all possible Weight and Authority to your Message, I command you to tell them from me, who am the Lord and Judge of all; before whom, every one of them shall give an Account of himself: That it is my unchangeable Decree, that,
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notwithstanding all the Objections and Cavils, which Ignorance and Pride may raise against the Contents of my Gospel. *He that believeth and is Baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

In farther Discourfing on this most memorable Proclamation from the Mouth of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, I fhall,

I. Explain the Import and full Meaning of the complex Term, Gospel, and what is implied in believing it.

II. Show the Extent of that Promise; *he that believeth and is baptized fhall be faved.*

I. The Gospel in its general and moft enlarged Signification, imports good News. And the Particulars of this good News, or Gospel, are with admirable Force and Concifenefs summed up. *Ifa. ix. 6. Unto us a Child is born, for our prefent Advantage and everlasting Benefit---Unto us a Son is given,--even the Only-begotten of the Fa-*

ther, to be our Surety, Advocate, and Propitiation; to the End, that God might be just and yet the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus. *And the Government shall be upon his Shoulders, to publish Laws, require our Obedience; to put them in our Minds, and write them in our Hearts.--- And he shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*

Now to display the Life and Death, the Resurrection and Ascension, and all the marvellous Transactions of this glorious Person, as accomplished for the great Purposes of magnifying God's Law; of making Atonement for Sin, and procuring Favour and Salvation for all that believe: This is the subject Matter of the Gospel.

I may add farther, that to declare the free and gracious Promises of God's Covenant, made on purpose to encourage and prevail with Sinners to return to him: Such as those Promises, for Instance.----- *Though their Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be made White as Snow.---I will take the Stony Heart out of their Flesh, and give them a Heart of Flesh. I will put my Spirit within them,*
and

and cause them to walk in all my Statutes and Judgments, and to do them. Each of these Particulars being equally Ground for rejoicing to all who have a sound Judgment, are therefore briefly comprehended, and expressed in one Word, the Gospel.

Now that this is the Subject-matter, and that these Things are the Contents of the glorious Gospel, I might easily prove from many Prophecies of the Old Testament; from the most important Ceremonies used under the Law; and from many Passages in the New Testament. But let it suffice, to cite only that full and comprehensive Passage, written, Luke iv. 18. quoted by the Redeemer himself, from the Prophet Isaiah. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the Poor.* And in Order to teach us with the greatest Clearness, what this Gospel imported, the following Words contain a full Explanation of its Contents. *He hath sent me to heal the Broken-hearted.* To deliver from Pain and Dejection, by the Things I shall declare to them, those who are cast down with Fear, through a Knowledge of their sinful State, and overwhelm-

ed with Godly Sorrow for it. *To preach Deliverance to the Captives*: To all who are miserably tied and bound, and led Captive by their vile Affections and inbred Lusts; by the condemning Power of an evil Conscience; and the detestable Tyranny of Satan. *To set at Liberty them that are bruised*: By richer Discoveries of Grace, and more abundant Supplies of the Spirit of Power, to establish and uphold those, who by frequent Falls from the Path of Life and Duty, have brought such painful and threatening Sensations on their Souls, as may be well compared to Sores and Bruises on the Body. *And recovering of Sight to the Blind*: By the Illumination of their Minds, through the Light I bring into the World, who by Reason of the Ignorance that was in them, understand nothing of the appointed Way of Salvation, nor perceive at all, the Things of the Spirit of God. *To preach the acceptable Year of the Lord*: That Time and Dispensation, in which are to be found the strongest Manifestations of Grace and Good-will to Men; assuring them of Acceptance with God, if they will hear the Voice of his beloved Son, and live in Subjection to him.

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With full Warrant therefore from the Word of God, we affirm, that the Revelation of Grace, Power, and plenteous Redemption in Christ Jesus, for miserable guilty Sinners, who seek diligently and with repenting Hearts to partake of it, is the GOSPEL.

It is declared concerning this Gospel, he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved. Who then art thou, O Man, who goest about to disannull the Decree of the Lord and Judge of the whole Earth? Who art thou, that darcest most presumptuously to deny that the Soul is saved by Faith only; when the most peremptory Decision of this important Point, stands recorded even in those memorable Words, with which the Son of God took his Farewell of this our lower World? *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.* My Honour, Faithfulness, and Truth, stand all engaged to see the promised Salvation, infinitely glorious, as it is, secured and fulfilled to him that believeth.

But then the Question of everlasting moment returns, What doth this Faith import? What doth this believing of the

Gospel, to which the inestimable Promise is made, imply? When this is understood, I am persuaded, all Apprehensions, least the Practice of moral Righteousness should be slighted, or the Obligations of Obedience weakened, will vanish away. And you will be able to see, with what Truth, the Apostle made that warm and noble Assertion,----*Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid, yea we establish the Law*, Rom. iii. 31.

The Scripture Sense, of the Words Faith and Believe, implies much more than the Assent of the Mind without Debate or Cavil, to all the Particulars included in the Gospel, as the very Truth of God. For this Assent may be, and very often is, where, there is no Believing, according to the Scripture Definition of it. The Book indeed, which contains the Gospel, must be received without Doubt, as the pure unmixed Revelation of God. But still, this is only a preparatory Step necessary to make Way for that *precious Faith*, of which St. Peter speaks; That Belief of the Gospel, to which the Promise of Salvation is annexed. Whilst you reject the Scriptures as
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a Fable, you cannot believe the Gospel; but you may allow the Scriptures to be true, and yet have no Faith in the Gospel.

This Assertion you will not dispute, when you consider the Belief of the Scriptures, is generally no more, than the Effect of Education. It arises from the Deference we naturally pay to the Notions our Forefathers held before us. Indolence, and a Carnal Mind, are glad to take up with national, established Opinions in Matters of Religion, for which they have no Relish; nor apprehend enough of their Importance, to put them upon Search and Enquiry. Hence, in a Country called Christian, all Men, except such as blaspheme Jesus Christ, are accounted to have Faith.

But the Belief or Faith, by which only a Man is *saved*, is far more than the simple Assent of the Understanding; obtained either through the Benefit of Education, or the much nobler Means of personal Examination and Trial of the Witnesses, which attest the divine Original of the Gospel. This Faith, is the *confident Trust*, and *abiding Dependence* of the Heart on the Gospel, as the infinitely wise, holy, and gracious

ous Appointment of God, for the Recovery of us sinful and rebellious Creatures. It is not only a Persuasion, firm and immovable, that every Thing related in the Gospel is Truth, and no Lie; but moreover a joyous Approbation, and a most thankful Acceptance of this Record, which God has given, of his Son; as most necessary and advantageous to yourself in particular; as the only Method of Salvation which can be depended on, for the Supply of the distressing Wants and Necessities of a sinful, helpless Creature. For sinful and helpless, every one will confess, is his own true Character, that is brought to the Knowledge of Himself.

The Definition given of Faith, in the Writings of the Schoolmen, viz. That it is believing upon the Authority of the Revealer, represents it *only* as the Act of the Understanding. But the Definition given of God, of that Faith which bringeth Salvation, hath much of the Affections engaged in it. *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness.* It implies no less the full, cheerful Determination of the Will to choose and embrace the Objects proposed to

to it, as most excellent, than the Conviction of the Understanding, that they bear all the Marks and Signatures of Truth.

This, I apprehend, is clearly proved by the two following Scriptures which come up to the Point in Hand. *Now Faith*, (that Faith which immediately before is declared to be the Principle, by which the Just, those accounted so by the great God himself, shall live) *is the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of Things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. The original Word (ὕπoστασις) which our Translators have rendered Substance, is explained in the Margin of the great Bible, by two other Words, Ground, or Confidence. From whence arise two different Expositions of this first Part of the Character of Scripture-Faith, *That it is the Substance of Things hoped for*. The one Interpretation is, that Faith is the requisite Condition of our Hope; the Basis and Pillar on which it is built. Because Salvation, the very Thing hoped for, is proposed only to Faith; and therefore must stand or fall with Respect to each Individual, in Proportion as he is endued or not, with this active Principle. The other Interpretation is, that Faith is a firm undoubted Persua-
sion

sion of the Truth of those Promises, upon which Hope depends, anticipating in Part, the Joys it expects, and giving some *present* Taste of Satisfaction, which in their Fullness, are yet to come; by making Men as certain of receiving of them, as if they had them in Possession.

The former of these Expositions of the first Part of the Character of Faith, contains no Absurdity, but is well consistent with the Doctrine of the Gospel, and the Terms of everlasting Salvation. Yet the Latter seems rather to be preferred, because it is the Sense in which the same original Word is used in the third Chapter of this Epistle, ver. 14. where the Apostle speaks of holding the Beginning of our (*ἐν ᾧ*) *Confidence, stedfast unto the End.* Add to this, it is the Sense, to which the whole Scope of his Argument directly leads; since it was the Confidence of Hope, which exalted those antient Heroes to sustain with admirable Patience, all Hardships, Miseries and Torture; and to trample on the Pride and Pleasures of the World, with amazing Fortitude. It was through the strong and powerful Persuasion of a future Recompence. Moses in particular, is proposed,
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whose Faith was so vigorous as to supply all the Defects of Sense, and to enable him to endure, as even *seeing him that is invisible*.

To the same Purpose, is that other Part, which compleats the Scripture Definition of Faith or Believing; *it is the Evidence of Things not seen*. Here the Object is diversified and extends farther; but the Nature and Operation of Faith is still the same. The Evidence here spoken of is expressed in the Original, by the Word (ελεγχον) a Word used among Philosophers, to signify the most strict and certain Demonstration. The Word implies, either that Sort of Reasoning, which cannot deceive, but necessarily infers a true and infallible Conclusion; or else that Conviction and Persuasion of the Mind, which is no Way liable to *Doubt or Hesitation*.

From either Acceptation, the infallible Certainty and Assurance of Divine Faith, is equally established. And though the Object of Faith is too sublime for the Understanding to grasp; though incapable either of mathematical or experimental Proof. Yet, nevertheless, it has such Evidence as is not in Reality at all inferior; it gains such Assent from the Mind, as labours

bours under no Uncertainty, and Triumphs over all Opposition. So strong and powerful is the Persuasion arising from it, that no Truths have been embraced with such Firmness, or maintained with such invincible Constancy and Resolution, as the Truths which are proposed to our Faith. *

If Faith then, or Believing, is truly defined by the inspired Writer; in the one Part, *the confident Persuasion of Things hoped for*: There, you see, is the absolute Engagement of the Affections of the Heart, and the *delightful* Reliance on the Certainty of the Things proposed: In the other Part, *the Evidence of Things not seen*, there is the full Conviction also of the Judgment and Understanding.

Another Scripture, is, if possible, a still stronger Confirmation, that the Nature of true Faith, is what has been described, Heb. xi. 13. *These all, viz. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, died in Faith, not having*

* If this, and nothing short of this is Faith, you see the Necessity of Praying, to be possessed and governed by it; and with what Reason, Faith is so often said to be the Gift of God, and of his Operation.

having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, perfectly assured of their Reality, and embraced them, i. e. affectionately and most joyfully received them, as Things most excellent and advantageous to themselves, and of the highest Importance ; which made so deep an Impression, and wrought so powerfully on their Hearts, that though rich and great, and mighty, they confessed they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth.

Now it is believing in like Manner the Gospel. It is this immoveable Persuasion, that the Grace, Righteousness, and Salvation revealed therein, are the greatest Realities ; and embracing them as such, with eager Hope, and unshaken Confidence, of being brought to the full Possession of them. This, and this alone, is the Believing of the Gospel, to which the Promise of Salvation is annexed.

Hence observe, I intreat you, and take particular Notice, how widely and totally *different* true Scripture Faith, or Believing the Gospel is, from that worthless Counterfeit of it, which generally passeth for Faith ; and with which the Multitude of nominal Christians, rest satisfied. Gold does not differ
more

from Dross, nor Weakness from Power, than what Men commonly call Faith, from what the Word of God defines it to be.

The common Faith which generally passes unquestioned and unsuspected, is as old as the Memory of the Man who professes it. How he came by it he cannot tell, but having never Atheistically denied the Scripture, or derided Christ, he has been *always* a Believer.

The true Faith, or believing the Gospel on the Contrary, has been obtained by Prayer, and is acknowledged to be the Gift of God. The Time is well remembred, when no other Reason could be given, why such and such Things were believed, than Custom and Education. The Time is remembered, by every true Believer, when his Faith was no more than a barren Conviction of his Understanding at most; a poor lifeless Assent to the Articles of the Christian Creed, void of all Approbation of it in his own Heart, and void of all Dependence upon it, as the Thing which most of all concerned the Life of his Soul.

But now, True Faith gives him confident Expectation of every Blessing promised in the Gospel,

Gospel, is the Foundation of present Peace and Joy, and exercises upon their proper and only adequate Objects, the best Affections of his Heart.

The common Faith, or believing the Gospel, complains not of its own Weakness, or seeks for more Strength and Establishment. It leaves a Man just what it found Him by natural Temper, and Disposition. It will suffer Him to remain alas ! still foolish, deceived, disobedient, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, and governed in the most abject Manner by worldly Hopes and Fears. Not so the true Faith. ---- Ambition itself does not court Honour more eagerly, than this seeks to be encreased. It cries Day by Day to be advanced to higher Degrees of Perfection. --- Its Property and Glory is, *to purify the Heart ; to overcome the World ; to make a Man chuse rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season, and to esteem even the Reproach of Christ, greater Riches than the World can give.*

The Nature of true Faith or Believing, being thus, from the Scripture Account of it, laid open : You may easily perceive the

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Cause, at least in Part, of the general Prejudice of Mankind against the fundamental Doctrine of the Scripture ; Justification by Faith only. If by this Faith is understood the bare Assent of the Mind, the allowing the Truth of the Things contained in Scripture, without dispute. Nothing is so false and diabolical as this Assertion. So far from being justified by *such a Faith only*, all the Works it can produce joined to it, will profit a Man Nothing. Because it wants that Affiance of Heart in God, and most unfeigned Submission to his Will, which is the Root from which alone every good Work can grow. Such a Faith cannot be too much disparaged, or too contemptuously exploded, nor the certain Ruin of building any Hope upon it, too frequently exposed.

On the other Hand, when by believing is understood (as the Scriptures teach us to understand the Word) a lively, active Persuasion in the Mind, of the Truth of the Incarnation, Life, Death, and Intercession of Christ, for the Purposes declared in the Bible ; with a most thankful Acceptance of God's method of saving Sinners, by this one Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus, with a
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Renunciation of all other Ways and Means pretending to the same End, as absurd, injurious to God, and perilous to the Soul. In this Sense of believing, it is not more plain from the Evidence of the Scripture that there is a God; than that *all* the Promises of Grace and Justification, of Help and Protection here, of Glory and Salvation hereafter, are made over to it.

Every other Thing called Faith, whether it be the blasphemous Antinomian's Boast, by which he horribly believes God is no Avenger of the Love and Practice of Sin, in them who pretend to see their Union with Christ; or whether it be the blind formal Pharisee's, deceitful Profession of Dependance on Christ, it is equally vile and refuse. It is Nonsense, it is Blasphemy, to suppose any Manner of Blessing or Grace, can be derived to the Soul, from a lifeless Opinion, in which the Heart has nothing to do.

Whilst on the other Hand, it is as plain from the Psalms and the Prophets; the Testimony of the Apostles, and the Words of Christ Himself, that *He that believeth the Gospel shall be saved*. The Reason is, because whosoever believeth this with his Heart, will be as much deterred from

Transgression and Disobedience, by the plain Denunciations of Christ, on the Wicked and Hypocritical, as he is led to apply to, and confide in Him for his promised Help and Salvation. For the whole Word of the Lord, is the object of every true Beliver's Faith; the Law as the Rule of Life, the Gospel as the Ministration of Life; every Commandment and Prohibition, no less than every Invitation and Promise of Grace.

Now He that believeth thus, shall be saved. No Acts of Disobedience in Time past shall be laid to his Charge; so as to prevent his receiving a Blessing from the Lord, and Righteousness from the God of his Salvation. Whoever thus believeth shall be saved, even *now* from Ignorance and Error, which hides the Sinfulness of Sin, for Christ is made of God, unto Him Light and Wisdom; from fearful Reflections and Guilt of Conscience, for Christ is his Righteousness and Propitiation; from the Dominion of vile Lusts and Affections, for Christ, by communicating to Him of his own Virtue, shall be his Sanctification. And in that great and terrible Day, when every Hypocrite and Unbeliever, the one who foolishly imagined his notional Assent
to

to Scripture Truths, was saving Faith; and the other, who daringly published his Contempt of God's Word, shall equally find Rejection at the Tribunal of Wisdom and Justice. At that Day when Millions alas! shall perish, having found no Mediator; then shall he that believeth, find the inestimable Worth of his Faith, *for he shall be saved from the Wrath to come.*

That adorable and almighty Saviour, to whom he has fled for Refuge; whose redeeming Grace revealed from Faith to Faith in the Gospel, He has laid hold on; as his *Hope*, will not make him ashamed. But compassed about with his Faithfulness and Truth, as with an impregnable Shield, He shall be safe from every Evil, and from every Fear.

Besides thus believing the Gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ requires every Man, that would be his Disciple, to give a publick Testimony, in the Face of his Church, and the World, that He is a *Sinner*, standing in absolute Need of his purifying Blood and Spirit. The Corruption of Human Nature, that most offensive Article to our Pride, is the Foundation of all Religion that cometh from above. Particular Care

therefore was taken under the Law, deeply to imprint this Truth on the Heart. Every Parent was to behold the Blood, streaming from his new-born Infant if a Male, and when only eight Days old, the Flesh of its Fore-skin was to be circumcised, as an outward and visible Sign of the *Circumcision of the Heart in the Spirit*, by which every vile Lust and inordinate Affection was to be cut off with Smart and Pain, though near and dear, as his own Flesh,

Under the Gospel, that highest Dispensation of Grace and Love, a bloody Ordinance would be unseemly. Yet the same fundamental Truth must be as forcibly taught. Every one without Difference or Distinction, is required to submit to Baptism, to be washed with Water, as an outward and visible Sign of that Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, which cleaves to every Child of Adam, and of the Need every one has of being *washed and cleansed, and sanctified, and justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

That Baptism, was appointed as the most striking Declaration of natural and acquired Guilt, is clear from this Scripture. *And*

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all the People that heard John the Baptist, and the Publicans justified God. They confessed the Truth of his Charge against them, as Sinners deserving to perish, *being baptized with the Baptism of John.* Luke vii. 29, 30. *But the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the Counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized.* They trusted in themselves as righteous, and would not be brought to own their Want of Purification, both inwardly and outwardly.

Now to refuse or despise Baptism, in this proud Pharisaic Spirit, is a deadly Evil, a frustrating the Counsel of God. Which is this, that every Soul of Man should say, with that burning and shining Light, to Jesus, *I have need to be baptized of thee.*

Nay, to overlook or set aside the Ordinance, under any Pretence, is a most flagrant Proof of the dreadful Effects of Enthusiasm, and the blinding Power of Education. Lamentable is it, that any who can call themselves Christians, should interpret away this Scripture Precept; and by magnifying the inward Operations of the Holy Ghost, slight the Ordinance of Water-Baptism.

Nevertheless where this is done through an erroneous Judgment; and true Faith in the Name of the only begotten Son of God, has its Seat in the Heart, and the Washing of the Holy Ghost, in Consequence of that, is experienced; we have a Warrant, and a most comfortable one it is, to assure us, that though the Hay and Stubble of such a foolish Opinion shall be burnt, the Man who imbibed it, may yet be saved. Since our Lord Himself, in a Manner very much to be remarked; in a Manner totally opposite to the bigotted Spirit of Papists, and those who in unhallowed Rigour, adopt their Sentiment in this Point; our Lord, I say, thus Words the latter Clause of the Commission He gave to his Apostles, *He that believeth not shall be damned.* Foreseeing, possibly, how many simple-hearted, faithful Souls, would be seduced into this Error, not through contempt of Christian Authority, but Attachment to Parental Instructions, He drops Baptism, and, as in all other Places, denounces Damnation only upon Unbelief. May the Lord grant us therefore his Grace, so perfectly and without all Doubt to believe in his Son Jesus Christ, that our Faith in his Sight may never be reproved.

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S E R M O N V.

The great Sin of Unbelief.

MARK xvi. 15, 16.

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the
World and preach the Gospel to every
Creature.*

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be
saved; but he that believeth not shall be
damned.*

Part the Second.

IN considering the former Clause of the
Text, I have already shown, what is
the Meaning of the word Gospel, viz. The
Revelation and free Offer of Grace, Mercy,
and Peace, from God the Father, by our
Lord Jesus Christ, in order to engage Sin-
ners to repent and return to him. That
believing

believing this Gospel, implies, embracing it as the infinitely wise, holy, and gracious Contrivance of God, and with all Affiance of Heart, depending upon it, as the only Way of Salvation.

Now to Persons unacquainted with the Enmity there is in the Minds of all fallen Men, against God, it must appear altogether incredible, that his Gospel, the richest Manifestation of his Love, should be despised, or rejected by any Sinner. That when the offended, the highly injured Majesty of Heaven, should humble himself to present a Rebel with a Pardon, and beseech him to accept the Honour of being made his adopted Child, he should be so daringly Insolent, as to slight the proffered Grace, and prefer the lawless State of Sin, to that of Reconciliation with God.

Nevertheless, Rejection of the Gospel, however inexcusable, has always been too frequent. Therefore, that God might appear justified, and every one be compelled to say, nothing could have been done more for the Salvation of Sinners, than he hath done; he hath denounced the most alarming Condemnation, full of extreme Misery against every one, who rejects this glorious
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and everlasting Gospel; so as not to depend on it alone for Salvation, and to be fashioned in the Manner of his Life, and the Tempers of his Heart, by it. He has powerfully addressed himself to the Master-Passion in every Mind, the Love of Self-Preservation, by declaring, *He that believeth not shall be damned.*

The peculiar and exceeding great Aggravations, with which this Sin of Unbelief is chargeable, lay more concealed from common Observation, than those Offences, which immediately injure and annoy our Fellow-Creatures; and on this Account the peremptory Denunciation in the Text, carries with it the Sound of an unreasonable and cruel Sentence. I shall therefore in the following Discourse, draw aside the Vail which hides the detestable Nature and Properties of Unbelief, by proving, it is not in the Power of Man to commit, nor even in his Heart to conceive any Sin, which justly deserves such extreme Severity of Punishment.

This will appear, by proving to you,

I. That Unbelief, whether it breaks out into open Blasphemy, or goes no farther than

than Contempt and Neglect of the Gospel, casts the foulest Dishonour upon the Perfections of God, and offers the greatest Injury to the Eternal Son, and Spirit.

II. That the only Causes from whence such Unbelief can arise, are vile, and desperately wicked.

III. That this Unbelief is a most impudent Denial of such high and uncontrollable Evidence, as never attested any past Fact, or any Doctrine, beside the Gospel of God.

I. I am to prove it is not in the Heart of Man to conceive, much less in his Power to commit any Sin, which justly deserves such Severity of Punishment, as the Sin of not believing with the Heart, the Gospel.

Selfish to the last Degree, as we are by Nature, we measure the Iniquity and Guilt of Sins, only by the Injury and Violence, which they offer unto Society, and to ourselves as Parts of it. According to which false Estimate, the execrable Attempt even of Satan, and the Angels which kept not their first Estate of Subjection, but dared to levy War in Heaven against the
eternal

eternal Majesty, must pass for a less Crime than Villainy between Man and Man.

But be not deceived, the most malignant Property and provoking Evil in Sin itself, is the Contempt and Injury it offers to the adorable Attributes of God.

Now judging according to this Rule, which cannot be disputed, without saying that Jehovah, like the Idol of Epicurus, sits in Heaven over all, absolutely unconcerned about our Sentiments of Him, or regard to Him. Judging according to this Rule, there is no single Species of Iniquity, comparable in Guilt, with that of refusing to depend on, and to embrace with all Joy, the Gospel.

By this very Act, every Unbeliever treats the Wisdom of God as Foolishness, the Truth of God as a Lie, and the highest possible Expression of his Love, as too mean and contemptible to deserve his cordial Regard.

By Unbelief it is evident, you treat the Wisdom of God as Foolishness. For it is not the Arrangement, the Beauty, and the perfect Harmony of the Things in this visible Creation, though these have excited Wonder and Admiration in every
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thinking Mind; been magnified by the deepest Searches of Philosophy; and do nobly display the Glory of God, and shew his handy Work. Neither is it the overruling Appointment of his Providence, which cares for and super-intends the World. It is not in either of these, which the most high God glories, as the Demonstration of his Wisdom. No, beyond all these Discoveries of that adoreable Attribute, and by Way of Eminence, Christ is expressly called the WISDOM of GOD. 1 Cor. i. 24.

In and by Him manifest in the Flesh, and through all his Undertakings in the Character and Office of the Redeemer, by this Means it is declared, Ephe. iii, 10. *that even to the Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places, i. e. to those exalted Angels who beheld and shouted together when the Foundation of the Earth was laid, the Gospel is revealed, to the Intent that unto them might be known the manifold Wisdom of God.* And as infinitely delighted with the more abundant Displays of this Perfection in the Scheme of Redemption, they are said to desire to look into it, the more accurately to acquaint themselves with

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the Things contained in the glorious Gospel.

1 Peter i. 12.

Can any Thing then equal the contemptful Insult offered to the Wisdom of G O D, by a wretched, ignorant, sinful Worm, daring to treat that as a Matter of little Importance, which was planned with such wonderful Counsel before the World was made; the Expectation of it, kept up by a Series of the noblest Prophecies; and the Accomplishment perfected; not by any created Being, but by Him, *who was with God, and was God.* Nor otherwise accomplished by Him, then by his assuming the Form of a Servant, and dying on a Cross. After such a costly, mysterious Method made use of, to regain our Paradise, and to procure Salvation for every penitent, and believing Sinner. After all this, to have it despised as a foolish Contrivance, or overlooked as insignificant, in Comparison of the Things of Time, is in the most shocking Manner to arraign the Wisdom of G O D. And if He who calls his Brother, who is really like himself, a Child of Ignorance and Darknes, *Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-Fire,* certainly, you who persist by your Unbelief to call

call eternal Wisdom so, deserve the severest Punishment, *i. e. to be damned.*

But if it is a provoking Insult, for a Creature so ignorant and foolish as Man, to set at nought the noblest Instance of his Creator's Wisdom; how does it increase the Sinfulness of such a Conduct, when at the same Time it represents the Truth of God, as a Lie. I will submit it to your own Determination, whether a more hateful and consummate Villain can be found, then one who traduces the Characters of the most sincere, as if no Credit was to be given to their most solemn Promises. Nay, if He should single out for the special Object of his poisonous Slander, some Character infinitely removed from Falshood and Disimulation, and make it his Business totally to destroy his Reputation in the Minds of others. Would you not in a such a Case with Indignation say, *O thou false Tongue, what Reward shall be done unto Thee? even sharp Arrows with hot burning Coals.*

Yet in this very Light doth the Scripture place before us every Unbeliever. 1 John v. 10, 11, *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in Himself; He that believeth not God (in his Testimony concerning*

cerning Christ and Salvation by Him alone) bath made Him a LIAR, because He believeth not the Record, which God hath given of his Son. And this is the Record that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.

What Aggravation is it possible to add to the Sin of Man, after you have said, that by it, He makes the blessed God the Fountain of Truth, and with whom is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Turning, to be that very Thing which amongst Men, is most infamous; that by his Sin, He makes the blessed God, a Liar?

If such an Imputation is wont to kindle unextinguishable Wrath, in every Breast, but that of the meek, humble Christian, when charged upon us by our Equals; knowing that to Lie, implies the Absence of every good Quality in the Heart. How shall we form any just Apprehensions of the enormous Provocation, it is to that God, whose Name is JEALOUS, to see and hear Himself thus reproached, by the neglect of his dear and only begotten Son amongst us? By the Slight put upon his Gospel, when it demands the most thankful Affections of Love, and deepest Reverence?

Can any higher Dishonour, or more cutting Injury, be offered by sinful Man to the God of Heaven?

Yes, this is still aggravated by the Consideration, that it treats the highest Instance of GOD's Love, as unworthy of any suitable Notice and Regard. It is Written, *God commendeth his Love to us, in that, when we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.* Our Creation by the Power of GOD, our Preservation by his Goodness, the Bounties of his Providence, and above all, his Long-Suffering towards us, though so frequently provoked to cut us off; are satisfactory Proofs, that He is loving unto every Man, and that his Mercy reacheth over all. But the Instance, proving his Good-Will to Man, above all others; proving that He loved us, with all his Heart, and Mind, and Soul and Strength, is this, *That He gave his only begotten Son, to the End that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* John iii. 16.

Now to sin against such LOVE, as this, to treat the Report of it, as the Device of Priestcraft, or to be no more affected with it, than if it was so, is the Excess of Hardness of Heart, and the highest Pitch of
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Baseness, Ingratitude can arrive at. Does God in this moving Manner, enough to melt down the most obdurate Heart, declare the afflicting Injuries He received from Israel of Old, saying, *Hear O Heavens, and give Ear O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished, and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me!* In what stronger Terms might his Complaint and Quarrel, be urged against Thee, O Man, whosoever thou art, that rejectest, or despisest his Gospel.

Hear O Heaven, and give Ear O Earth, might He say, for a horrible Thing is come to pass. My Son, my only begotten Son, the Brightness of my Glory, the express Image of my Person, have I delivered up for your Offences, and made a Curse for your Sins, and behold you trample this my Son under your Feet, you count his Blood a common Thing.

Much of Insolence it implies not to fall prostrate in Adoration before the Revelation of the Wisdom of God. Still greater Wick- edness of Heart, to depend on any other way of Salvation, than that Wisdom has provided. But the horrid Perfection of Iniquity, is to remain unconcerned and

unaffected amidst the most amazing Display of the Riches of God's Grace.

Now all this, in Truth and Fact, is chargeable on every one, to whom the Gospel is offered by the Word of God, and yet is not cordially received, and most conscientiously obeyed.

Again. He that believeth not the Gospel, so as to be governed by it, and depend on it, with his whole Heart; offers the utmost Indignity and Affront to God the Son.

It is written, *though he was rich, i. e. possessed of all the Glories of proper Divinity, yet for our Sakes He became poor.* He was afflicted and he was oppressed; no Sorrow was like unto his Sorrow, they buffeted, spit upon, mocked, scourged, and crucified Him. All the Motive and Inducement, which led Him to endure these Things, was the Joy of making Reconciliation for Iniquity, of opening a Door of Hope, and Access to God, which his Justice and Purity must have eternally forbid, had not Christ *suffered the Just for the Unjust, bearing their Sins in his own Body on the Tree.* No additional Honours could be offered to Himself, who enjoyed equal Glory with the Father before the World

World was, to lead him to undertake for us : It was the joyous Prospect, that his Gospel would be received by many, not in Word, but in Power; that he should see the Travel of his Soul in the eternal Salvation of Sinners, who by this means would be made meet for Heaven ; that he should see this and be satisfied.

But in every particular Instance, where the contrary happens; in the Case of every Unbeliever, who either casts out his Gospel, with blasphemous Revilings, or only Honours it with hypocritical Professions; there the Son of God, sees all his Designs of Love frustrated : His Agony and Bloody Sweat ; his Cross and Passion, profiting nothing.

Such Contempt or Neglect of his Death and Mediation, loudly proclaim, he might as well have sat in Heaven for ever, and never humbled himself to interpose in our Behalf. Since without his Undertakings, we might fare as well, and obtain as much of Mercy, as we desire.

The violent Provocation, which such a Disposition towards the Lord Jesus Christ, gives, is emphatically set forth in this striking Light, Heb. vi. 6. *Who crucifie to them-*

selves the Son of God afresh, and (as far as in them lies) put him to an open Shame.

Since all the Glory, and the Excellence, nay the very Fitness and the Wisdom of his Undertakings, is utterly denied, unless the Gospel is received with all Thankfulness, and trusted in, with all Confidence, as the sure Foundation of a Sinner's Hope, and Peace with God.

Once more, he that hath the Gospel offered to him, and rejects or over-looks it, does the highest Despite to God the Holy Ghost.

The most severe Condemnation, which St. Stephen charged upon the Persons, who were the very Murderers of the Lord of Life and Glory, was this; *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in Heart, and Ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, Acts vii. 51.* Who hath spoken in and by the Servants and Prophets of God. The very same Charge stands against every Unbeliever. You do despite to the Spirit. For the great Office and Employment, he is engaged in on Earth, is *to take of the Things which are Christ's, John xvii. 15.* which relate to his Person, Character and Kingdom; and *shew them* unto Men. To discover their Excellence in so affect-

affecting a Manner, that they may entertain more exalted and worthy Thoughts of Christ. To set at nought therefore his Gospel; to be too much engaged in Business or Pleasures; to seek after the Knowledge of its Truth, is directly opposing that eternal and ever blessed Spirit, who is sent by the Son, into our World, to magnify his Name and his Gospel above all Things.

Attend duly to these Declarations, which are frequent in the Scripture, and you will own it is a just and righteous Thing, to denounce Damnation upon every one who hath this Gospel proposed to him; and by avowed Rejection, or manifest Neglect, plainly proves he doth not believe it.

This will appear more evident, by proving, in the second Place,

II. How exceedingly base and vile, the only assignable Causes of Contempt towards the Blessed Gospel, are.

These are, and can only be, Pride of Understanding, or Sensuality of Heart. And can any Thing be more unpardonable than to plead either of them, in Excuse for making of none Effect, the whole Counsel of God?

With Respect to the First, is it at all agreeable to Reason, that the Understanding of an ignorant, corrupted Creature, should be fixed as the Standard, to measure Truth? Or when God declares his Mind, that such a one should rise up against him, and say, I know not how these Things can be? Therefore your Authority is no sufficient Reason for me to believe them. Can Arrogance itself go farther, than to exalt itself above the Omniscient, rejudge, his Maker, and be the God of God?

This would be true, were you innocent before God. But when you are guilty of Rebellion against his Government and most Holy Law, to quarrel at the Terms, which nothing but amazing Grace could offer; this is, to repeat your Crime, and more deeply lay open the Pride that is in you. For what Reverence in the least Degree can you have for God, if you will not allow his own Word, without all Controversy, to be True, in what it declares is worthy of all Acceptation?

“ If you will believe only what is demonstrated to you,” says that original Writer, Lord Bacon, in his Book of the Advancement of Learning, “ You pay no
“ more

“ more deference to the MAJESTY of GOD
“ in this Act, than you would to the most
“ notorious Liar. For this is certain,
“ whatever Suspicion you might have of
“ him, and his Veracity, you could not
“ withhold your Assent from what you saw,
“ or what forced itself on your Notice.
“ When is it then,” saith this masterly
Writer, “ That I can give Glory to GOD,
“ by my Understanding ?” He answers,
“ When, upon his *naked Word*, I believe
“ what no one can explain ; and embrace
“ with my *Heart*, the Mysteries he pro-
“ poses as the Object of my Faith.”

The same Determination, we have, from
that Man of Argument, and most conclu-
sive Reasoner, the Illustrious Chillingworth.
In the sixth Chapter of his Immortal De-
fence of the Reformation, and the fifty-
sixth Section, he speaks thus :

“ Propose me any Thing out of the
“ BIBLE, and require whether I believe it
“ or no ; and *seem* it ever so Incomprehen-
“ sible to human Reason, I will subscribe
“ it, with Hand and Heart, as knowing
“ no *Demonstration* can be stronger than
“ this, GOD hath said so, therefore it is
“ true.”

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If it is reasoning Pride, therefore, which leads you to despise the great Mystery of Godliness, which is the subject Matter of the Gospel; the Cause, instead of extenuating the Guilt of Unbelief, abundantly increases it: For what can be more criminal, than not to acquiesce in what God has attested to be his own Revelation; because, forsooth, you *a Worm of the Earth, brutish in Understanding, and born as the wild Asses Colt*, cannot reconcile every Part of this Revelation, with your Ideas of what is fit for him to reveal?

But in almost every Case, where the Gospel is rejected, or overlooked, though the Disgust and Offence, which Reason takes at it, is the plausible Pretence: The Understanding is but the Dupe of some vile Affection; and the real Cause of Unbelief, is Sensuality of Heart, and Love of the World. This is frequently declared in his Scriptures, from whom no Secrets are hid. I will direct you to two compleat and awful Proofs of this Point.

The Lord Jesus Christ Accounts in this Manner, for all the Opposition and Enmity he met with, from those who with their own Eyes saw those very Miracles; the authentic
Relation

Relation of which, was to be a most sure Foundation of depending upon him as the Christ, the Son of God, to the End of the World. *This People's HEARTS are waxed gross, they are become Earthly, and sensual in their Affections, and their Ears are dull of Hearing, and their Eyes have they closed, least at any Time, they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and should understand with their Hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them, i. e.* Their Ignorance, and Unbelief, is altogether voluntary and chosen; they hate to be reformed, and therefore will not receive my Gospel. The other Proof is, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. *But if our Gospel be hid, if where it is preached and established upon its proper Evidences, the Wisdom, Beauty and Glory of it, are not perceived, it is hid to them that are lost. Lost, to the Love of what is excellent and profitable to all Men; and if they continue in this Unbelief, lost for ever. In whom the God of this World, hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, least the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.*

Here

Here you see the real Cause, however gilded over with fine Pretences; the real Cause of all Contempt of the Gospel, or Indifference to it, is declared to be a worldly, sensual Heart; which Satan taking Advantage of, still more and more darkens in its Apprehensions of God, and of all spiritual Truth.

In further Proof of this, consider what receiving the Gospel, entitles every sincere Believer to, and then you will acknowledge it is so much for a *Man's Interest*, that nothing but the most violent Love to the Gain or Pleasures of Sin, can make him stand out.

To as many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, John i. 12. The Privileges of which near and dear Relation, are briefly these; such Access with Confidence in Prayer, to the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, as Children have to their tender Parents; a reviving Sense, that for Christ's Sake he hath forgiven you. Daily Supplies of Strength to overcome inbred Lusts, and to stand firm in the Path of Duty, and advance to farther Attainments in Grace. An Assurance from the most true Promise of God, of his Almighty Defence, all the Time of your Warfare;

Warfare ; and when that is ended, everlasting Triumph with the Armies of Heaven, in the presence of your great Leader and Commander.

To partake of these Privileges which distinguish and exalt the Sons of God, above all the Rest of the Children of Men, is inseparably connected with a sincere Belief of the Gospel. Whilst no useless Pennances are imposed, no rigorous Self-denial enjoined, no Renunciation of any Pleasures of Life, but such as debauch the Soul; or of any Conformity to the World, but such as either totally keeps Eternity out of Sight, or will make you careless and trifling about your unchangeable Condition in it.

When it is therefore so evidently for your present and future Advantage, to be really a Believer of the Gospel, there can be no other Reason for neglecting and despising it, but Pride and Sensuality. That Pride, which spurns a Dictator, though it be even God Himself, or which hates to be so great a Debtor, to the Grace of a Saviour, as the Gospel compels every one to confess and feel Himself : Or that Sensuality, which headstrong and lawless cries out, come on, let us enjoy ourselves, we are they that ought
to

to indulge, and take our fill of Pleasure, who is Lord over us ?

Now judge, whether either of these Causes of Unbelief must not be as hateful in the Sight of God, as the loathsome Offspring it brings forth ? Whether it is not the worst of Aggravations of the Sin of despising and overlooking the Gospel ; only because there is too much Pride in the Heart, to submit to be saved by Grace through Faith ; or such a more than bestial Love of Voluptuousness, as to make you strive with your Maker, and set his Laws at open Defiance.

Lastly, This terrible Doom is with the greatest Justice and Equity, denounced against you, if you believe not the Gospel, because God Himself hath attested it with such high and uncontrollable Evidence. It is not to be supposed, that a Scheme, in which all the Perfections, and the Glory of each of the Persons in the God-Head, are so fully displayed, should yet be left in any Part of time, like a deserted Infant, destitute of most credible and numerous Witnesses, to prove from whom it received its Being. Were you qualified to try them to their full Extent, you would presently find

find far stronger Evidences that the Gospel is of God, than for the Truth of any thing you have not seen with your own Eyes, and your own Hands have handled.

Who can deny either the Establishment of the Gospel in Parts of the World most remote, from the Place where the Commission in the Text was given? Or that this Establishment was obtained without any human Means; without the infernal Aid of Persecution's Sword; or the corrupting Influence of the Smiles and Favours of Power? Who can find in the Annals of History from the Creation to the present Day, an Event like unto this? No sooner was the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven to empower the despised, impotent Apostles, to disciple the Nations, which the Lord has so dearly purchased with his Blood: Then as if the Destroyer of the Gentiles was on his Way to make Lands desolate, and lay waste Cities without an Inhabitant: The Heathen furiously raged together, and the Rulers took Counsel against it, to stifle it in its very Birth. But behold it maintains itself against a World in Arms! Behold it triumphs, it spreads,

spreads, at length Kings bow down before it, and Nations to this Hour, acknowledge and adore it, as the great Power of God unto Salvation !

But if the present Establishment of the Gospel, when considered in all its Circumstances, so fully proves it to be of God, the present Condition of its first, and still implacable Foes, adds considerably to the Evidence. Ask any of the disgraced, the banished Tribes of Israel, who by an Interposition of Providence continually miraculous, remain a People distinct from all the World, without a King, an Altar, or a Country ! Ask any one of them what they think of that Jesus of Nazareth, the God of the Christians ? They will answer one and all, that He was hanged for that very Article we maintain as the Glory of our Holy Faith, for making Himself equal with God. This has been received from the invariable Tradition of their Fathers, till you may trace it up to those very Men, who not knowing what they did, cried out, *Crucify Him, crucify Him, His Blood be upon Us, and upon our Children.*

Very few indeed, not one in a thousand of bold, infidel Blasphemers, have examined the

the Evidences for the Truth of the Gospel; nor taken Pains to qualify themselves, to comprehend the total Amount of it, any more than a Day-Labourer is fitted to calculate an Eclipse. Therefore the Sin of despising it, unexamined, is the greater. But to every Man open to Conviction, there is the highest Proof of the Truth of the Gospel level to every, the meanest Capacity. *If any Man will do his Will, He shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* John vii. 17. What greater Proof can be given, that it came from God, then that it really produces the very same Change in the Heart, which from its first Rise, through its whole Progress, is described in the Word of God.

The Gospel commends itself to us as the proper and only efficacious CURE, which God hath appointed for the various Diseases of the Soul. It addresses us as Creatures in extreme Need of a Physician; swoln with Pride, burning with feverish Lusts, the whole Head sick, and the whole Heart faint; and for this Cause troubled with an evil Conscience, and afraid of Death and Judgment. The Gospel engages that all these Complaints and most dangerous Symptoms

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shall

shall be removed; that you shall have Peace with God, and with yourself, be made temperate in all your Affections, be endued with a new Heart, and a new Spirit, provided, only, you will use the Helps and live in the Regimen it prescribes. If you will call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom God hath laid your Help, and look up to him for Healing and Strength, who is set forth as able and willing, to save that which is lost.

The never-failing Success of the Gospel in giving this Assurance of its Truth not to be shaken, has been remarkably seen, in Times of Distress and Persecution for the Faith. Then, when many lettered Clerks, highly famed for Knowledge; and Writers in Defence of the Truth of Christianity, have drank down the nauseous Dregs of Superstition, and through Fear of Death belied their better Judgment. Even then, some of the poorest amongst the People, conforming to the Advice they have heard out of the blessed Book of God, but could not so much as read: And finding it mighty in its Operation, to make them Holy and Happy, to change their Wrath and Peevishness into Gentleness and peaceful Resignation,

nation, their Ignorance of themselves, the World, and God, into a most useful and solid Knowledge, have gladly embraced a Stake, sooner than a Recantation; and under all the Ignominy and Torture of Blaphemers of the Truth of God, have triumphed in the Flames to confirm it.

Now you are commanded, to make this Experiment; to do what the Gospel plainly declares to be the Will of God, and then no less assuredly will you know the Truth of it, then you do the Excellency of some specific Medicine, when it performs for your Body, all it pretends to, nay all you can wish.

To despise therefore and neglect the Gospel, when it comes recommended with such strong, such singular Evidence, and challenging the Trial of Experience, is a high and additional Aggravation of Guilt.

Let us now then sum up the whole Charge, which stands against you, if you neglect and despise the Gospel.

By this you reproach the Wisdom of God the Father, as Foolishness, treat his Truth as a Lie, and after your hardned, and impenitent Heart, despise the highest Instance of his Love. You set at nought

the Agony and Bloody Sweat, the Cross and Sufferings of God the Son; which with equal Love and Grief he endured for you. You grieve and resist God the Holy Ghost, given to be the Comforter of the Church, and to seal every Member of it, to the Day of Redemption. All this you do, only for the Sake of gratifying your Pride, and living according to your own corrupted Will. All this you do, notwithstanding God sends his Gospel to you, with undeniable Evidences, it is his Truth and no Lie; notwithstanding, he commands, and intreats you to believe it, and peremptorily assures you, it is at the Peril of your immortal Soul, to do otherwise.

Can a heavier Charge, than this, be brought against a sinful Man? Is it needful, in order to make his Guilt appear worthy of Damnation; that besides the Sin of Unbelief, he should have that, of being obnoxious and injurious to his Fellow-Creatures also? Was he to love and practice every Iniquity, the World, the Flesh or the Devil could prompt to, could he offer a greater Contempt and Insult to God the Judge of All?

Look

Look upon *Unbelief*, in this Scriptural Representation of its Nature, and you will abhor it, as you do Murder. Look upon it in this Light, and you will see that no Honesty, Sobriety, Humanity and Benevolence, even supposing, they were united and possessed in the most perfect Manner, deserve any Esteem, or can turn away Wrath, *whilst* the Gospel is neglected and despised.

When you hear it said, therefore, (as to the Shame of a Christian Land, it too often is said) such a Person is a most good-natured, worthy Creature, charitable to the Poor, and courteous to all: But as for Faith, and Grace, the Knowledge and Love of the Gospel, he troubles himself not about such Matters. When you hear these treasonous Speeches against the Gospel; you must be yourself sadly infected with Unbelief, if you do not openly declare, (or wanting the undaunted Spirit of an established Christian) if you do not in your Heart instantly reply, He that believeth not, robs the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, of their Honour and Glory; He that believeth not, is a most insolent, ungrateful, detestable Sinner in his Sight; *He that believeth not shall be damned.*

For suppose a Man, even compleat in the Discharge of all relative Duties, an affectionate Father, a tender Husband, a generous Master, uncorrupted by the Frauds of Trade and Merchandize; yet cannot all this excuse him from being a rebellious and provoking Sinner; *when nevertheless,* he pours Contempt on his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier? If you think this the rash Assertion of a hot-brained Zealot, try, whether it is not the universal Sense of Mankind, wherever their own Honour and Authority are struck at.

Have you in your Household, a Servant, kind, and sweet-tempered, and beloved by all his Fellow-servants; will you accept this as any Compensation for defrauding you of your Property, or for gainsaying your just Commands? Will his SOCIAL Qualities for which he is admired by his Equals, atone for his Insolence towards his Superior? Or could you bear to hear such an audacious Fellow, plead the Unreasonableness of your Resentment against him, since he had the good Word, and the good Will of all his Fellow-servants? Now the Great God has put this very Case. *If I be a Master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of Hosts,* Mal-

Mal. i. 6. Where indeed, whilst his Wisdom, Truth, and Mercy, his well-beloved Son, and eternal Spirit are overlooked and despised? Was the God of Wisdom and of Truth, more foolish, and more false than we ourselves are; yea, more indifferent to our Welfare, than we are to his Glory, he could not be more abused, or worst treated than he is by every one, that lightly esteems his Gospel.

It is therefore a Truth, which like every other Truth in the Bible, hath its Foundation in strictest Justice and Equity; that he that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him, or as it is expressed in the Text, *he that believeth not the Gospel, shall be damned.*





S E R M O N VI.

The dreadful End of Unbelief.



MARK xvi. 15, 16.

And he said unto them, go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but He that believeth not shall be damned.

Part the Third.

THE Nature of the Gospel, and of the true Faith in it; the Benefits obtained by it, and the extreme Guilt of rejecting, or overlooking it, have been distinctly laid before you. To conclude the Subject, and more effectually excite in myself and you, a just Dread of this greatest of all Sins: I shall,

I. Endeav-

I. Endeavour to lay open that Fullness of Punishment, which most deservedly will be executed on every Unbeliever.

II. Press the Necessity of examining yourself, whether you be in the Faith.

III. Bring to your Remembrance, some Evidences, by which you may prove your Faith to be true and Scriptural ; and therefore, such as will save you from the most miserable Doom of Unbelievers.

I. Then I am to endeavour to lay open, that Fullness of Punishment, which we are assured of God, is to be the dreadful End of all Unbelievers. *He that believeth not, shall be damned, i. e.* Every Man, whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, profligate or decent in his Manners, who hath the Gospel proposed to him, and yet departs out of this Life, trifling with it, and neglecting it, for the Sake of worldly Business or Pleasure ; whosoever he is, he shall feel a Judgment worthy of that God, who is jealous of his Honour ; who has tried every mild and loving Method to save his

his Soul alive, and still been requited to the last, only with Contempt and Rebellion. *He shall be damned.*

The exceeding great and eternal Weight of Misery, which this Doom implies, the same Book of God which threatens it, does sufficiently explain. And in order to awaken in you a just Degree of Care and Sollicitude to avoid it, by seeking diligently in Prayer, the Gift of True Faith, if you have it not already; and the more abundant Confirmation and Increase of it, if you have; I shall lay before you, four several Representations of this Misery, given by God himself: So that no Man may Despise what is said on this Subject, without despising the awful Declarations of his Maker and Judge.

The first Particular then you are to take Notice of, as constituting Part of the Misery of the Damned, is the Knowledge of the compleat and exquisite Happiness enjoyed by Men once of the same Profession and Employment with themselves; equally depraved by Nature; encompassed with the same powerful Enemies; and exposed to the same seducing Temptations; who yet overcame by the Blood of the Lamb, and

and the Word of *his Testimony* : Whilst they themselves are cut off from any Share in this Bliss. The Foundation of this Assertion, is written, Luke xiii. 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

Fond of Honour, and infinitely eager to share in Gratifications highly pleasurable and joyous ; how afflicting, and distressful, judge you, is it, to be debarred from them. Even here, when on some most extraordinary Occasion, there is a general Assemblage of the Mighty and Noble ; a studied Provision of sweetest Sounds to charm the Ear ; of richest Dresses to please the Eye ; of luxurious Meats and Drinks to gratify the Palate ; a Collection of all at once, that can ravish the carnal Mind : What a painful Punishment is it, not to be allowed the Privilege of Admission to such Scenes of Pleasure and Delight ?--Especially when your Condition and Rank in Life, entitles you to this great Privilege, and you stand excluded only through the Infamy of your Character ; which is become so great, that

that no Person of Honour or Worth, will suffer you in their Company.

Now this is the very Idea and Image, our Lord and Judge sets before us, to help our Conception of the Misery of the *damned*. He tells us they shall see all the Holy Men, and faithful Servants of God, triumphing amidst the exalted Honours, and glorious Delights of the Heavenly World. The Sight shall instantly create an infinite Desire to share in them. And knowing they are enjoyed by Men, once of like Passions with themselves, and once Partakers of Flesh and Blood, they shall offer for Admission: But as Persons, whose very Presence would utterly Disgrace the whole Assembly; whose Behaviour and Spirit of Mind, would insufferably offend and shock every Child of God: Instead of finding Admission, they shall be thrust out, with Violence and Indignation, separated to the greatest Distance from that Happiness they behold altogether lovely, and therefore most impatiently covet. Their Disappointment, therefore, our Lord, foretells, shall fill them with the Rage of Grief, and the Torments of Envy. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.*

But

But this Exclusion from the Joys and Triumphs of the whole Company of Heaven, might be endured with more Ease and Patience, if those Spirits, who are the destined and everlasting Associates of the Damned, were of more aimiable Quality and Disposition. But alas! They are confined with those, and none but those, who are a Plague and Torment to all about them. Would not any Man of a good Mind, choose strangling rather than Life, was he to pass the Remainder of his Days, amongst the Felons of a common Jail? Was he to be continually in the midst of Anger, Wrath, Clamour, Bitterness and Malice; amongst a set of Criminals fiercely raging against each other, when their miserable Condition called aloud for mutual Compassion. Yet worse than this, is the destined End of the Soul which dies in Unbelief. It must take up its Abode with the innumerable Multitude, whom God at length has given over to a reprobate Mind; who are become a Thousand-fold more the Children of Hell, than the worst of Men, appeared to be on this Side the Grave. In that wide-extended Prison, where not the least Degree of restraining Grace ever comes,
where

where is the total Absence of every good Quality, and all that is Evil, strengthening and encreasing.

This Representation of the miserable End of the Unbelieving and Disobedient, is contained in the following Scriptures. *The Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God, Psalm ix. 17. The Son of Man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom, all Things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and shall sever the WICKED from among the Just. Mat. xiii. 14. For without (without the Gates of Heaven) are Dogs and Sorcerers, and Whore-mongers, and Murderers, and Idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lie, Rev. xxii. 15.*

From these plain and strong Testimonies, it is undeniable, that the Soul which is damned, shall have no better, or more noble-minded Companions, than those who were the very filth and off-scouring of the moral World, --- whose Pride, Rage, and Malice, mutual Reproach, and mutual Revenge, render them the shocking Executioners of Almighty Vengeance, on each other.

where

Yet

Yet even in the midst of such execrable Spirits, it would be a considerable Mitigation of Punishment, was there any Degree of Peace and Self-complacency in a Man's own Breast. *But there is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked.* Even here when they look into themselves, though in the midst of Vanity and Pleasure, *They are like the troubled Sea, whose Waters cast forth Mire and Dirt.*

What then must be the Feelings of Conscience, when it is all Ear to hear the innumerable heavy Charges, an immortal Memory, will too easily furnish against it. A self-accusing Conscience has made many even here, Spectacles of Misery, howling upon their Beds under a Sense of the Punishment justly due to their Sins. And yet the fiercest Accusations of Conscience now, must be very faint and dull, in Comparison of what the Soul that is lost must feel, for here is but the beginning either of Spiritual Grief and Joy, of Hell or Heaven. It doth not yet appear, what the Sinner or the Saint shall be.

Yet this is certain, that when the actual Loss of eternal Happiness, and the actual Feeling of its opposite Misery, awakens

wakens the Sensibility of Conscience to the utmost, no Torment can be imagined more extreme.

Oh! most wretched State! to be perpetually self-condemned, in the midst of Anguish to know it is all self-produced, the Fruit of my own hideous Choice, the unavoidable Effect of refusing to hear Him that speaketh from Heaven.

We cannot be enabled better to conceive the deep Anguish of such Reflections, then by the Image our Lord has chose for this Purpose, when He says, Mark ix, 44. *In Hell their W o r m dieth not.* Their own Conscience occasions a Pain, like a Worm gnawing the most sensible Part of the Human Frame, and never ceasing to vex and to corrode it.

The last Image, more frequently made use of by Him, then all that have been mentioned, in order to set forth the Misery of the Damned, is most terrible. God knew, how very lightly many would regard the Threatning, that they should have no Place amongst the Saints, whose Ways and Manners appear to favour much of Absurdity and Foolishness in their most corrupted Judgment. He knew, that the threat-

threatening of Confinement with all the wicked and abominable Workers of Iniquity, would but little affect them, who have not their Eyes now opened to see, how tormenting such Companions must prove, when all those Restraints which curb their evil Principles in this Life, are removed in Eternity. And as for the Lashes of an accusing Conscience, He knew the Bulk of Mankind would have very faint Conceptions of the Pain they inflict, till they had themselves endured them, by the Spirit of God, convincing them of Sin.

G O D has therefore chosen an Image which strikes upon our Senses with the greatest Force. That most amazing Element of Fire, one single Spark of which resting upon the Flesh, gives the most raging Pain, and whose devouring Power when ever it gets Dominion, is confessedly most dreadful: That Element is chosen, to represent the Miseries, coming upon the Unbelieving and Disobedient. *The Wicked, saith our Lord and Judge, shall be cast into a Furnace of Fire.* Mat. xlii. 42. *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire.* Mat. xxv. 41. And to answer the popular Objection, arising from the conceived Impossibility of

dwelling in the Fire, our Lord declares, Mark ix. 49. *Every Sacrifice*, every one who has made Himself, a Vessel fitted for Destruction, and a Victim to eternal Justice, *shall be SALTED with Fire*, the Fire whilst it utterly consumes his Happiness, shall preserve his Being from Diffolution and Decay. Indeed this is the very Circumstance which compleats the miserable Doom of those who die in Unbelief. Were they for a Time only shut out of Heaven; for a Time imprisoned with the whole Multitude, of desperately wicked Spirits; for a Time pained with Self-condemnation and tormented in Fire, the Misery, though unspeakably great, would still be rather purgative, than penal.

But can a Man learn Obedience by the Things which he suffers in Hell? Is the Prison of righteous Vengeance, ever represented in Scripture, as a School of Virtue, or a State of Probation? Do the Gifts of Repentance, of Faith, and Holiness, ever come there? Or can any one without these, be admitted amongst the Spirits of just Men made Perfect, and into the Presence of God? Can any one be received, where no unclean Thing must enter, who
in

in the whole Bent of his Mind and Heart is still a Lover of Sin? and therefore a Scandal and Nuisance before God, and his Holy Angels.

Even according to the Nature of Things, would we observe and reason from them aright, this cannot be. But we have a Word of Truth infinitely more sure, than the Reasonings of Men. The Mind of God, is fully declared in this Point, as in every other of Importance to our eternal State. Three of these Evidences I will produce.

The First is written in that very ancient Book, the Book of Job. xxxvi. 18. *Because there is Wrath, the Wrath of God threatened against Sinners, BEWARE, let not your Heart be hardened and presumptuous, beware you yield not to in Sin any Degree, Least he take you away with a Stroke, and then a great Ransom cannot deliver thee.* Not even the Ransom that was paid for Sinners, when Jesus shed his Blood on the Cross.

A Second Evidence I call upon to prove the never-ceasing Misery of every Soul that is in Unbelief; is written, Mat. xxv. 46. *And the Wicked shall go away into Everlasting Punishment.* (εις κόλασιν αἰώνιον)

but the Righteous into Life Eternal. (εις ζωην αιωνιον) where it is most remarkable, that what ever you will define the Import of the Word *Eternal* to mean, when used to signify the Duration of the Heavenly Happiness of the Saints: The *same* Signification must be given to the very same Word, when used to express the Duration of the Punishment of the Wicked.

This Argument pressed so hard upon a late eminent Writer, that determined not to allow the Eternity of Hell Torments. He could no otherwise evade the Force of this Text, than by this Assertion, absolutely wild and unsupported, that even the Duration of the Happiness of the Saints, was not to be Everlasting.

The last Evidence I call upon to prove the Continuance of the Misery of Damnation, is Rev. xxii. 11. *He that is Unjust let him be Unjust still. i. e.* He who is destitute of that righteous and upright Spirit, which God indispensably requires, at the Day when the Throne shall be set, and the Books be opened for Judgment; let Him for ever remain in that deplorable Estate. *And He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.* if at the Day of Death and consequently

at

at the last Day, He is found under the Defilement of Sin, let him never be cured of his loathsome Disease.

Thus have I brought before you, the several shocking Circumstances, which make up the whole Amount of the Misery, of the Soul, which dies in Unbelief. It implies you see, eternal Banishment from the World of Happy and Holy Spirits. Imprisonment with all the wicked and abominable Rebels against God; in the midst of the Anguish of a Self-condemning Conscience, and the Torture of Fire, without Hope of Mercy, without Ease or End.

What then, Sirs, shall we do? shall we madly go about to disannul the Judgment of God, that we may escape with Impunity in our Guilt? The Attempt is impious, and must be found impracticable. Shall we charge God foolishly, as if the dreadful Penalty, He has unalterably fixed, to deter us from rejecting and trifling with his Gospel, was rigorous and cruel? This Procedure will be as unreasonable as the other. For are Criminals and Delinquents ever allowed to determine what Manner or Degree of Punishment shall be executed upon them? Will even a fallible, Human

Legislature bear with such Insolence, in guilty, condemned Malefactors? How much less then shall it be endured, when the all-perfect Law-giver, when God Himself, *Who is Holy in all his Ways, and Righteous in all his Works*, peremptorily declares the Penalty, by which He would enforce Esteem and Regard to his own Gospel.

Or shall we say, notwithstanding the Decree is so absolute, yet if we are careful to live in Honesty and Sobriety, and to do no harm to others, it is not then consistent with God's Attributes, to pronounce a Sentence of Damnation upon our Souls? Alas! this most fashionable and prevailing Opinion cannot be established as any sure Foundation to trust to, till it has blotted out of the Bible such Declarations as these, *Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, i. e. inwardly digest and heartily embrace the Doctrine of Christ crucified, ye have no Life in you. To them that are contentious and obey not the TRUTH, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath. Rom. ii. 8. When the Lord shall be revealed from Heaven in Flames of Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God,*
and

and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thes. i. 8. He that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him. John iii. 36.

All these Scriptures as evidently render the Salvation of every Man and Woman *impossible*, who departs out of this Life, without True Faith in the Gospel; as those other Scriptures, which are directly levelled against Whore-mongers, and Drunkards, Liars, and such like, prove the Perdition, they are bringing upon themselves.

Shall we then keep the Misery which awaits every Unbeliever, every careless Trifler with the Gospel, out of Sight? So would the Destroyer of Souls have us to do. To act so absurdly, as if shutting our Eyes would prevent the Danger, and utter Forgetfulness of it, prove an everlasting Security.

No, the only rational, wise, and absolutely safe Way, is to yield to the awful Denunciation, *He that believeth not shall be damned*; and to allow, that with Respect to every one to whom the Gospel is proposed, this Decree is as unchangeable as God himself.

And since this is the present State of our Case, that Unbelief is the certain Way to such Misery, that is enough, to make the Ears of him that heareth it, to tingle; it is our great Business and Duty, who watch for your Souls, to press, as I proposed in the

II. Place, the Necessity of examining yourself whether you be in the Faith.

But many will say, what Necessity can there be to press this upon us, we are CHRISTIANS, we certainly do believe. Our constant Attendance upon the Worship of God in Christ, ought in Charity to be judged a sufficient Evidence, that whatever we want, it is not Christian Faith.

This Objection, I take the more Notice of, because it is so very common, though without any Force: For will our own Observation, or the Word of God, suffer us to allow, that going to Church, even constantly, and where the Worship is truly Christian and Scriptural, is any sufficient Evidence, that Men believe the Gospel, *i. e.* receive the Report it brings to their Ears, with unfeigned Thankfulness, and confidently expect what it proposes.

How many in every Congregation, come to Church? How many in every Congregation

gation are present through the Force of Custom, or only to maintain some Degree of Reputation? How many come out of a most absurd and wicked Persuasion, that Attendance upon Worship, will be set over to their Account, and Ballance against the Charge of some Sins, they love too much to part with?

This Judgment, even Charity itself is compelled to make, since you can scarce find a single Congregation, where there is not open Indecency and Irreverence of Behaviour; a plain and visible Contempt of God, when the only Design of the Assembly is to ascribe unto him the Honour due unto his great and fearful Name.

Further, is it not the Lamentation of all real Believers, and the Triumph of Infidel Scoffers, that there is scarce any Sin, or evil Temper, which has not Dominion over one, or other, of those, who are constant Attenders upon the Worship of God? Men, who will defraud, and lie, and swear; Men, who are proud and haughty; who are lewd, profane, or covetous, make up a Part of every Congregation.

Yet notwithstanding such abominable Lusts, and vile Affections reign over them,
even

even these unhappy Slaves, flatter themselves they have Faith in the Gospel. Is there not a Cause then, vehemently to press you to compare the Counterfeit with the genuine Faith? To examine the Properties, and the Influence of each, by the Touch-stone of GOD's most Holy Word?

Is there not a Cause to do this, when we read what was written for our Instruction, the Account of the strong Delusion, both Jews, and professing Christians, have been under in *this* Respect; arrogating to themselves, the Name of Believers, when they were indeed, and in Truth, guilty of Unbelief before GOD. Two most memorable Instances of this Kind, out of many, I shall refer you to.

The principal Jews, who most bitterly opposed, and at last crucified the Lord of Life and Glory, still positively asserted, they were Abraham's Children, the Disciples of Moses, the Temple of the Lord. They heard the Scriptures read every Sabbath Day, and observed all the appointed Institutions of the Law. Yet in the midst of such high Professions of Faith, they were really destitute of the Thing itself. To these very Men, doth our Lord thus
most

most remarkably Address himself, John v. 45. *Do not think, that I will accuse you to the Father, for not receiving me, as the Christ, the Son of God. There is one that accuseth you: Who could that possibly be? Why the very last Person in the World they suspected, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, as you most confidently assert you do, ye would have believed me, but if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my Words.*

Here then is a Case, upon Record, of a People enjoying all the Means of Grace, constantly using them, nay undoubtedly persuaded, none more firmly believed in Moses and the Scriptures, than themselves, yet charged by the Mouth of Truth itself, for having no Belief in Moses, *i. e.* no other, than what was the mere Effect of Custom and Education. A Charge so true, that under the Power of Unbelief, this very People put *him* to Death, of whom Moses wrote, that *whosoever heareth him not, shall be cut off from amongst the People of God.*

Another Case, which as remarkably proves the Necessity of examining yourself, whether you be in the Faith, is that of the
Church

Church of Laodicea. Some of them were Eye-witnesses to the Miracles wrought by the Hands of those who brought the glad Tidings of the Gospel to their Ears. All were under Discouragements sufficient to have driven them, one would have thought, out of Formality and a lifeless Profession. But he, whose Eyes are as a Flame of Fire, beheld them self-deceived, mistaking the Change of their religious Creed, and mode of worship, for saving Faith in his Name. Highly valuing themselves as Members of the Church of Christ, and interested in all its glorious Privileges; when in Reality and Truth, they had no more Title to them, than when they served dumb Idols, even as they were led. Our Lord knowing how to have Compassion on the Ignorant, and those that are out of the Way, lays open to them in these memorable Words, their true Condition. *Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with Goods, and have need of nothing, i. e.* that you are Christians altogether, interested in all the Promises, and Blessings belonging to the Church of Christ, wanting nothing more to prove yourselves to be of the Family of God. So blind alas! are you through Pride and Self-conceit ;--
and

and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. In the most forlorn, exposed, deformed, Condition. And then, that they might indeed become what they foolishly imagined they were already, the Lord Jesus Christ, most affectionately exhorts them, to make immediate and earnest Application to Him, for his Gifts and Graces, which they had only pretended to do before. *I Counsel thee to buy of me Gold tried in the Fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white Raiment that thou mayest be clothed.* Rev. iii. 17. 18.

Now so long as the very same Principles subsist, I mean the Pride and Corruptions of Men's Hearts, the same dreadful Effects of Hypocrisy and Self-deceit will be frequent. And Christians called so from their Baptism and Profession, are altogether as prone to deceive themselves in the Matter of Faith, as the Inhabitants of Jerusalem of old, or the Church at Laodicea. Every Pastor therefore and Teacher, who would take unerring Wisdom for his Guide and Pattern; who in tender Mercy would strive to save Men from the miserable Doom of Unbelief; must not take it for grant-

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granted that his Hearers, *are* possessed of true Faith, and Christians to the Purpose, but on the contrary use every Method to search and try them. He must call loudly upon them to produce such Evidences that their Faith is genuine as the Scripture allows and will be satisfied with, and such as no self-deceiving Hypocrite can prove belong to Him. For unless the Bible confirms and allows your Faith to be True, ah ! what avails your utmost Confidence that it is so. In such a Case the more sure, the more blind and presumptuous are you. I will now therefore in the

III. Place, Bring to your Remembrance, some evident Marks of the Nature and Exercise of true Faith in the Gospel, as it stands distinguished from the Faith of Education, and that of all formal Professors.

Its Property is first of all to discover to you your Danger, as one whom the *Scripture hath concluded under Sin, upon whom Judgment is come to Condemnation*. To discover your Danger to you on this Account, so distinctly, and so powerfully, as to make you, with Heart-felt Concern, apply for Pardon to that *Lamb of God that taketh away the Sin of the World*. to sue for

for his Regard, *who is exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins.* Delivered from the vain Imagination of recommending yourself to GOD, and becoming entitled to his Mercy, by Virtue of your own Deservings, you plead the Promises of Grace, the Life, the Death, and Intercession of the Divine Mediator, expecting on no other Ground and Foundation, to be accepted, *but in the Beloved.*

That this is the invariable Influence of true Faith in the Gospel, I prove by the following Scriptures. *Surely shall one say in the Lord have I Righteousness, and Strength, unto Him shall Men come. Isai. xlv. 24. They shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He hath glorified thee. Isai. lv. 5.*

Both these Old-Testament Representations of the first Influence of true Faith, on the Mind, are united by the great Apostle, in that Expression by which he distinguishes Himself, and the whole Body of Believers from the Rest of the World. Heb. vi. 18. *That WE might have a strong Consolation, who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold upon the Hope set before us,* Here you see, that
live-

lively Sense of Guilt and Obnoxiousness to Danger; that immediate Flight from it, and eager Concern for Safety, which wholly possessed the Mind of the Man-Slayer, and brought Him within the Gates of the Heaven-appointed Asylum, is chosen to denote the essential Workings of true Faith on the Mind, its awakening Sense of Wrath threatened, deserved, certain to be executed, unless you are found in Him, whom God hath given for a *Sanctuary* and who is expressly called our Hope.

Now by this Influence and Operation, true Faith in the Gospel, stands as much distinguished from the false Faith, of Custom and Education, as the living Original, from the dead Picture. For till you have true Faith, though you confess Christ died for Sinners, and that you have Hope to be saved by Christ, so far from crying to Him, *Save Lord, or I perish. I flee unto thee, for Thou art a Place to hide me:* Instead of being thus influenced, false and customary Faith, will not allow you to think you have been *wicked enough*, to be in Danger of being lost both Body and Soul in Hell. It will make you say within yourself, "I am not it is true, without my Faults,
" yet

“ yet they are not of such a deep Dye, as to
“ justify any alarming Apprehensions of the
“ Wrath to come”. In Consequence of such
Blindness of Heart, and Contempt of God’s
Word, you will continue in Security, not so
much as understanding ■ what is meant,
by coming to Christ, that you may have Life.

Further true Faith in the Gospel, will
not only make you at first flee for Refuge
to the Redeemer, but constantly make
Application to Him, in those high and
glorious Offices, He sustains and discharges
for his Church. Conscious of much want-
ing, and of much amiss in yourself: Of
much Disorder in your secret Affections,
even whilst unblameable in your outward
Conversation: Your Dependance, that none
of these Things shall bring on you the
Punishment they deserve, will be upon your
faithful and merciful HIGH PRIEST, in
Things pertaining to God; who is given
to make *Reconciliation*, for the Sins of the
People. You will plead his holy, sinless
Obedience, his atoning Death, and In-
tercession, that you may go on your Way
in Peace, and continue in the Favour of
God. You will see there cannot be in the
very Nature of Things, any Intercourse

between you, and an infinitely Holy God, but through this glorious MEDIATOR. In all your Approaches to God, these fundamental and most essential Truths of the Christian Faith, *shall be as Frontlets between your Eyes*, I am the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE, *no Man cometh to the Father but by me. If any Man sin, we have an ADVOCATE with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He is the Propitiation for our Sin.* If you pray for Knowledge, you will remember Christ is the Light, *Given to Lighten the Gentiles*: Or if for Strength, you will place your Confidence in that most encouraging Scripture, *I have laid help upon one that is mighty, able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God, by Him*; if for Peace and Assurance, on that Promise, that He was appointed to *comfort them that mourn in Sion.*

Thus if you are possessed of true Faith, or Belief in the Gospel, you will daily apply to Christ, as the appointed Prophet and Priest, and King of the Church, to the Glory of God the Father.

And to mention no more Evidences, if you believe the Gospel you will feel a sincere Love in your Heart, to the Lord Jesus Christ,
pomp-

prompting you to observe and do, what he commands, without thinking *any of his Commandments grievous*. The Faith of Custom and Education, as it doth not make the Heart sensible of the Benefits, Christ has really purchased; nor discover in the least, his Grace, his Excellency, and Glory, renders Self-denial for his Sake, very irksome, if not impracticable.

But that true Faith, which is the Evidence of Things not seen, reveals in a strong affecting Manner, the Love of Christ to Sinners, his Power and Glory. By this Means, it creates a chearful Desire, and Readiness of Soul, to prove what is his good and perfect and acceptable Will. When his Zeal to suffer and to die, in order that his Righteousness might be unto all, and upon all that believe in him, is apprehended, Obedience flows spontaneous. *If any Man love me, saith the Redeemer, (and who can be persuaded of his Love to his Church, and not love him again) he will keep my Commandments.* And whenever we are so happily converted from the Pride, and Self-conceit, that naturally reigns in us, as to judge, that if one died for all then were ALL dead. The Consequence

of such a firm and lively Persuasion is, *The Love of Christ constraineth us.* With a pleasing, but mighty Force, it over-rules our natural Aversion to the Holy Commandments of God, to the Spirituality of true Religion, and to the Mortification of Sin. It obliges us to do the little, in our Power, in Imitation of him, and Obedience to his high and aimiable Authority, who hath loved us, and given himself for us.

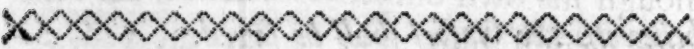
Possessed of these distinguishing and infallible Evidences of the Truth of your Belief of the Gospel; 1. Your earnest Application, as a helpless, guilty, self-destroyed Sinner, to Christ Jesus, the only Saviour. 2. Your abiding Dependance on Him, as your perpetual Advocate with the Father, your Light, and the Strength of your Life. 3. Your cheerful sincere Obedience to him as your Lord and Governor, from a Knowledge of his Love and Excellence. Possessed of these Evidences, not to be disproved, nor to be disputed, great will be your present Peace; infinitely greater your future Glory. All the Miseries of Hell, and all the Horrors of Damnation, instead of afflicting and distressing your Soul, will excite

excite you to magnifie with warmer Gratitude, the Power and Grace of that Arm, which brought Salvation from so great a Death. And when your Eyes shall behold, the *horrible Tempest, the Fire and the Brimstone raining upon the Heads of the Ungodly.* Psal. xi. 8. Then will you see how much you are bound for ever and ever, to extoll that Word of Righteousness, which proceeded out of the Saviour's Mouth, *He that believeth the Gospel shall be saved.*



S E R M O N VII.

Alarming Visitations, Instances of
God's Love.



PSALM cxviii. 18.

*The Lord hath chastened and corrected me,
but he hath not given me over unto Death.*

THE faithful People of God, have
ever retained a lively Sense of his
all-directing Providence; such a Sense as
enabled them to look through every second
Cause and to receive whatever befel them
as his own Act and Appointment. One of
this Number, when his Prosperity both in
temporal and spiritual Things was so great,
that he thought he should never be moved;
freely acknowledges it was *the Lord of his
Goodness, who had made his Hill so strong.*
And

And when he experienced a sudden Change to the most oppressive Affliction, *I was dumb*, says he, *and opened not my Mouth, because it was thy doing*; or if at length, he sought the Removal of his heavy Cross, he thus most piously makes his Supplication, *Take away THY Plague from me, I am even consumed by the Blow of thy Hand*. In the same Sentiment we find David in my Text; though his own Subjects treacherously conspire against him, and so far succeed, as to bring his Life into extreme Jeopardy; yet, as if no Instruments had been made use of, he ascribes both his Danger, and his Escape, to the GOD of his Salvation: *The Lord*, says he, *bath chastened and corrected me, but he hath not given me over unto Death*.

Words most applicable to the Case of your Minister now standing before you---- chastened and corrected, of a long Season, with a life-threatening Malady*; yet lifted up again, by the Hand of GOD, from

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* This Sermon was the first preached after the Author's most unexpected Recovery from a Sicknes, which brought him to the very Point of Death, and rendered him incapable of labouring in the Ministry for eight Months.

the Gates of the Grave, and strengthened
once more to speak in his ever-blessed
Name.

Words which naturally lead me to discourse on that comfortable Truth, more fully learnt, by my late Experience, *viz.* The Mercy and Love of God, in visiting Men with fore Afflictions in general ; and with such in particular, as bring them nigh unto Death, though they dissolve not their Earthly Tabernacle.

Now this Mercy and Love of God, I shall make evident by proving, how much all Men stand in Need of such alarming Visitations: The Unbelieving and Disobedient, that they may be awakened into a just Concern for their own Salvation: The dear Children of God, that they may know more of themselves, grow in Grace, and the Knowledge of God. And for these great and truly merciful Purposes, God is often pleased to visit both, with such alarming Afflictions.

The Unbelieving and Disobedient, want such alarming Visitations to awaken them into a just Concern for their Eternal Salvation. So long as they have Health and Strength, and Liberty, this is the least and last of any Thing in their Thoughts. They
will

will take their Ease, eat, drink, and be merry. They will be diligent and careful about nothing but the Things of Time; how to procure, and how to enjoy them in the best Manner they may. They dwell and live in the Creature, and cleave with all their Affection to the Things of this World, as if they could be their adequate and all-sufficient Happiness.

The Father of Spirits sees their miserable Delusion; but instead of avenging the insolent Contempt, they by such a Choice pour on his own infinite Excellence; compared to which, every Thing is viler than Dung: Instead of avenging his most injured Honour, he calls in tender Pity to them by his Word, saying, *O Earth, Earth, Earth, bear the Word of the Lord.* Jer. xxii. 29. *All Flesh is Grass, and all the Godliness thereof, as the Flower of the Field.* Isa, xli. 6. *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* Ecc, i. 2. *What is a Man profited, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Matt. xvi. 26. But though God speak thus once, and twice, yet Men in Prosperity perceive it not. He is unto them, as one that mocketh. Yea, though their own Conscience, through the Inspiration of the

the Almighty, accuse them, and would lead them to Repentance, they can drown its still small Voice in the Midst of Health, Strength, and Business; or by Violence, overcome it for a Time.

Therefore, because they will thus set at nought his Counsel, and resist the friendly Rebukes of their own Conscience, they force him (unless he would suffer them to die in their foolish Dream, and perish unwarned for evermore) to teach them with a strong Hand, saying, *Hear ye the Voice of the Rod, and who hath appointed it. They force him, to bind them in Fetters, and hold them in Cords of Affliction, that he may shew them their Work, and their Transgressions, that they exceeded.* Job xxxvi. 9. He takes from them the Foundation of all their false Happiness, their Health and Strength; that they may feel how poor and miserable, how weak and helpless, they are in themselves. He commands Death, the King of Terrors, to look upon them, and make them feel a Dread of that eternal Judgment, for which, alas! they have made no Preparation, and from which there is no Escape.

In

In this Case, they have in themselves a Proof, of all that God has said in his Word, that it is Truth and no Lie. They feel, that Riches, and Friends, and Wealth, and Parts, are all but vain Things, to help and support a Man in the View of Death. They feel these Things cannot comfort their immortal Souls, which now begin to be like the troubled Sea, and cannot rest. Now, their Consciences will speak, and set the Battle in Array against them, by saying, *Thus and thus hast thou done, and God held his Tongue.* Whilst under the Smart of such Accusations, they have no Blood of Sprinkling; no Attonement to flee unto; no Interest in him, who alone can wash them, and cleanse them from all their Sin, and present them spotless before the Father. Nothing but either fearful Expectation of Punishment, or painful Uncertainty of their future State.

Thus destitute of every Comfort, deprived of every Prop on which they could lean, and feeling the whole World (if in their Power) would not be able to kindle the least Spark of Light and Peace; this is the Time and the Place when, if ever, they repenting and fighting within themselves

selves shall say, *How have we spent our Money, for that which is not Bread, and our Labour for that which satisfieth not.*

Isa. lv. 2. How have we fed upon Asbes and a deceitful Heart hath turned us aside, so that we could not deliver our Souls; nor say, Is there not a Lie in our Right Hand. *Isa.*

lxv. 20. This is the Time and Place when, if ever, strong Cryings and Tears are poured out to God; when the Sinner, like the starving Prodigal, beholds the universal Dearth around him, comes to himself and returns to his much injured Father in Necessity, Supplication and Prayer, saying, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

Then, has the Visitation of God prospered in the Thing for which it was sent. And God, even the mighty God, to whom it belongeth justly to punish Sinners, will save such a one, for his dear Son's sake. Even in this Situation, very many it is true, still continue stupid, and of a reprobate Mind; or though awakened and affrighted, give no Glory afterwards to the God of Heaven, by fruitful Repentance; but desperately, after their hard and impenitent Hearts, abuse this, as they have done every other

Method

Method tried to convert them, only to make their everlasting Damnation the more severe.

But then it is as true, that an innumerable Multitude of those who are received into Glory, and of those who are now adorning their Faith by a holy and heavenly Life, date their Conversion from those never-to-be-forgotten Minutes, when they had the Sentence of everlasting Condemnation in themselves; expecting, as soon as absent from the Body, to feel the unmingled Wrath of GOD abiding upon their Souls. They acknowledge, without Reserve, it was no Excellency they saw in GOD, no Sense of the Love of Jesus dying for them, that made them cast away all their Transgressions and seek to be created again in Righteousness and true Holiness: No, it was the horrible Dread which overwhelmed them, when (as they thought) they were immediately to appear before GOD in Judgment.

So that the Love and Mercy of GOD, in visiting with these alarming Visitations, the Unbelieving and Disobedient, must be thankfully acknowledged and adored; though, we see alas! too many sad Instances, where they have been of no good Effect;

Effect; for this only proves Afflictions to be, like all other Means of Grace, which have no Virtue of their own necessary Operation, without the effectual Working of the Spirit of God.

But as the Sin of having hardened the Heart under such alarming Visitations is exceeding great: The Love which I owe to your Souls constrains me to stop here, and speak a few Words to every one who may be chargeable with this Guilt.

Know then, O Man! who still remainest what thou wast before, after such an alarming Visitation; you are the very Person of whom the Lord may most justly complain, *What could I have done more for you, that I have not done?* What Condition could I have placed you in, so fitted to prepare and dispose you to accept the offers of my Grace? I have cast you into the Furnace of Affliction; my Hand in Pain and Sickness has been heavy upon you, even to make you feel the Symptoms of approaching Death; though in Love to your Soul *I delivered you from the Pit of Corruption.* Isa. xxxviii. 17. yet after all, thou art as a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke; as my Rod found you, so it has left you, in your Unbelief,

Unbelief, your Lusts, your Rebellion. Oh ! consider what a plain and strong Proof is this, that you are nigh unto cursing---all but doomed to that Place of Torment where the miserable Sufferers, instead of confessing their Sin with penitential Tears, *blaspheme the God of Heaven because of their Anguish.*

But it is Time to turn our Thoughts to the dear Children of God, that we may perceive his Love and Mercy in afflicting them with painful life-threatening Diseases. By this Means, they are taught to know much more of themselves. Like Novices in other Cases, they are apt to think more highly than they ought of their own Grace and Attainments. After such a real inward Change as they are conscious of, from Darkness to Light; from walking after the Course of this World to walk by Faith; and from being under the Wrath of God to be comforted with a Sense of his pardoning Love. After this, they are apt to fancy the whole Work is done, and that they are meet, through Jesus Christ, for Glory. And being convinced in their Judgment, that they ought to be wholly given up to God, to have no Will of their own, but to live

as Instruments in his Hand ; nay, sincerely desiring and praying it may be so with them ; and finding the Victory in little Trials, they conclude they really are what they desire to be, and in Truth, possess what they only approve in Judgment. How great therefore is the Love, how manifest the Pity of God to undeceive them, by bringing them into such a State as will discover to them, what a World of Corruption, what a base Mixture still remains in them of what must be done away. How often do they then, happily discover what lay before concealed, even beyond Suspicion ? Much inordinate Self-Love ; much Discontent against the righteous Dispensations of their FATHER and their God ; much struggling to throw off the Cross, it is his Will to lay upon them. Then, how often does the eminent Professor of Faith in Christ, find the cutting Reproof of Eliphaz to Job, sadly applicable to himself, *Behold ! thou hast instructed many, and strengthened the weak Hands ; thy Words have upholden him that was falling and strengthened the feeble Knees ; but now it is come unto thee and thou faintest, it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.* Job.

Job. 36. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. iv.

iv. 3. 5. Thus the Believer, is better instructed in the most useful Knowledge; the Knowledge of his own Heart, which in a Time of less severe Trial, he was comparatively, a Stranger to: He sees the Weakness of his Grace, and the Strength of his evil Nature. This fills him with Meekness more than any Teacher can do; it works in him Godly Sorrow, and earnest Application to the Throne of Grace, that what is crooked in him may be made strait, what is weak may be strengthened, and what is lacking in his Faith and Love, his Patience and Resignation to the Will of God, may be supplied out of the Fulness there is in Christ Jesus. For these alarming Visitations which take away the deceitful Covering, and make manifest the hidden Corruptions of the Heart, are made effectual also to the Faithful, to purge them away. This is one of those exceeding great and precious Promises the Lord their God has given them. *I will turn my Hand upon thee, and purely purge all thy Tin.* Isa. i. 25. *By this* (by being smitten of God) *shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the Fruit to take away his Sin.* Isa. xxvii. 9. The same blessed Effect of Affliction to the Children of God

is declared by St. Peter, when speaking of those who are *kept by the Power of God, through Faith unto Salvation*, he tells them that it was necessary for them that the *Trial of their Faith being more precious than of Gold, though it be tried with Fire, might be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* 1 Peter i. 7. Gold, though in itself the purest and most valuable Metal, has still its Dross and Alloy; so that to give it its full Lustre, and raise it to its highest Value, it must be melted down in the Furnace. In like Manner, though the Faith and Hope, the Patience and Love, of the Children of God, are of great Price in his Sight; yet that they may be purged and refined more from every base Mixture, they must pass through much Tribulation, and be tried as it were in the Fire.

And this is so invariable a Rule with God, that if we are *without chastening, whereof all are Partakers*, saith the Apostle, *then are ye Bastards and not Sons.* Heb. xii. 8. So that when God delights in an especial Manner to Honour any amongst the Sons of Men, he saith not to that Man I will give thee Prosperity and Ease, *but behold I have*

have refined thee in the Furnace of Affliction.

Isa. xlviii. 10. Thus Job, before he is set forth as a Pattern of Patience to the Church of Christ, is bereaved of all his Children, plundered of all his Substance, and smitten with sore Boils, from the Crown of his Head, to the Sole of his Foot.

St. Paul, that chosen Vessel, was in Afflictions and Distresses without Measure; within were Fears, without were Fightings. And would you see more perfect Patience than was in Job, or more finished Graces than shone in St. Paul; you must look for them in that Jesus, who as far exceeded the most afflicted of Men in the Weight and Number of his Afflictions, as he did in the Perfection of his Holiness: Yet of him, even of him, it is written, *That as a Son, he learnt Obedience by the Things which he suffered.* Heb. v. 9.

It is a suffering State alone which calls forth every secret Grace; which renders them by Exercise, both brighter and stronger, and gives them Scope to make their Work perfect. Therefore, when we read of leading into Captivity, and killing with the Sword, *Here*, says the Lord of his Church, *here is the Patience and Faith*

of the Saints. Rev. xiii. 10. *i. e.* Now is the Time for the Display of those Graces: Now are to be seen the Triumphs of Faith, and the marvellous, invincible Strength of Patience. The Battle and Encounter, draw forth that Prowess, which in Times of Peace, lay chilled in the Veins, for Want of Opposition and Exercise.

And what shall I say more; the Time would fail me, to instance in all the other Graces of the spiritual Life. To show how Godly Sorrow, for Sin, is happily increased, by feeling the bitter Fruits of it in Pain and Sicknes. How a true filial Fear of God, recovers its Force, under the Correction of his Hand, which is so generally weakened by Prosperity and Ease. How our Love of him is abundantly increased, when we find all the World nothing. How our Affections are fixed on Things above, when we are feeling the Emptiness and Vanity of all below. Enough has been said to prove, that when God chastens his believing and obedient People, it is in Love and tender Mercy; *It is for their Profit, that they might be Partakers of his Holiness.* Heb. xii. 10.

Again,

Again, by such alarming Visitations, the dear Children of God, are taught to know more of him, of his Power and Faithfulness. Of these glorious Attributes, though so necessary to our Well-being and Comfort, what dark, what low Apprehensions, do even real Christians entertain! Apt to fear, they are as if every Thing was too hard for the Almighty: And where Appearances are against them, to say within themselves God hath forgotten! Will He, can He, now deliver?

To engage therefore a more hearty Confidence from them who obey Him, He brings them into Trouble, and into a great Fight of Afflictions: *He Hedges up their Way with Thorns, and Walls up their Paths with hewn Stones*, and brings them under the very Sentence of Death, that they may see his great Salvation, that he is able to make a Path through the great Deep. *Then Israel shall cry unto me, my God we know thee; then shall they say, Great is the Lord, and great is his Power, yea, and his Wisdom is infinite.* By such Deliverances they are sensibly taught the Truth and Reality of every Promise He hath made them. What He commanded them con-

fidently to expect, their Experience now proves, is fully accomplished.

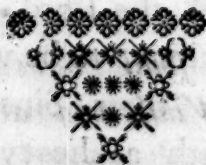
Do they hear him thus engage his Honour, *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify my Name.* Psalms l. 15. They find this good Word of the Lord, though tried to the uttermost, doth not fail in one Jot or Tittle. Does He promise, *Though thou walkest in the midst of Trouble, I will be with thee. My Saints shall rejoice in their Beds:* They can declare how true the Lord their Strength is in fulfilling his Word, when they have found by happy Experience, that *in the Multitude of their Thoughts within, his Comforts have delighted their Souls;* even the Consolations that are in Christ. For though their own Thoughts were dark and dismal, and those not a few in Number, but a long Train, a Multitude breaking in upon them, and swallowing them up; yet soon were they visited with his Comforts, which were Light and Life to their Souls. Thus knowing the Name of the Lord, how true and faithful He is, they will put their whole Affiance and Trust in Him; will wait with Patience in Times of Adversity, and never grieve more, and be cast
down

down as if he would cast off his People, that pray unto Him, and love his Name.

From what has been said, you are to learn, my dear Brethren, that the most alarming Visitations, are not so much to be dreaded as Flesh and Blood are apt to make us imagine. If you are unbelieving and disobedient, you want nothing so much; for it is written, *the Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them.* Prov. i. 32. and all your Blessings are but Curses in Disguise. If therefore you have any Love for your own Souls, pray that the Lord would not let you any longer alone, to be with those who are at Ease in their Sins, but scourge your Flesh with a heavy Hand, that your Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.

You who are holy and beloved, obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ, rejoice abundantly in the Thought, and be thankful that no Manner of Affliction can befall you from which you shall not reap much Fruit. Though your Tribulation may indeed be great, your Conflicts very sharp and of long Continuance, all shall work Patience, and Patience Experience, and

Experience Hope. Behold! I shew you
 a Mystery, the Lord your God shall make
 the withered Rod of Affliction to bud, yea
 to bring forth the peaceable Fruit of
 Righteousness, to you who are exercised
 thereby.



S E R M O N VIII.

Christ the only Refuge.



XXXII. 2.

ISAIAH ~~III.~~ 2.

*And a Man shall be as an hiding Place
from the Wind, and a Covert from the
Tempest.*

THIS is one of the most noble
and striking Representations of the
Redeemer, which we find even in the
sublime Writings of Isaiah. A Repre-
sentation designed to raise our Adoration
of Him to the highest Degree, and make
us gladly confess, Happy are the People
who have Him for their Friend, and for
their Defence. In my Discourse upon
it, I shall

I. Give

I. Give you a brief Description of the infinitely glorious Properties, which distinguish and exalt this Man.

II. Explain what is meant by that Wind and Tempest, from which He is an all-sufficient Shelter.

III. Point out the Character of those, whom alone He will defend and hide, and conclude with an Application of the whole.

I. I am to give you some Description of the infinitely glorious Properties, which distinguish and exalt this Man, who is set before us, by the inspired Prophet, as an hiding Place, and Covert for the Children of Men.

And if those who have taken upon them to display the Excellencies of mere Human Characters, have confessed themselves at a Loss, though renowned for Eloquence, where to begin or end amidst so many Things worthy of Admiration and Praise. How much more justly, might the same Difficulty be pleaded where the Glory of the Character is absolutely without a Parallel. Where all is perfect and divine.

vine. However for the Sake of Method, let me fix your Attention on the Entrance of this Man into our World, for in his Nativity He stands most honourably distinguished from all the Human Race. Behold a Virgin conceives Him, by the over-shadowing Power of the Holy Ghost! and He, the second Adam, by this Means is born, as the first was formed, in all the Beauty of perfect Holiness. Not a Taint of Original Sin, the Fault of our Nature, was found upon Him. In Him that compleat Harmony, which ever should subsist between the Soul, and its eternal Creator, was uninterrupted. No Will had He, different from that of his Heavenly Father. All his Affections, like an irresistible Torrent, rushed forward *always to do what pleased Him*. So that had his Heart been visible to Human Eyes, it would have appeared no other than a living Altar, from which the never ceasing Sacrifice of Adoration, Praise and Love, ascended up to Heaven, with a sweet-smelling Savour. His whole Life was totally exempt from every thing approaching towards a Defect, *He fulfilled all Righteousness*, and with Respect to his Purity and Holiness, *He was the Bright-*

Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person.

Yet was this Perfection of every Divine Grace manifest in his Life, the smallest Part of his Distinction, for Angels attain to this Excellency, they perfectly and continually accomplish the whole Will of GOD. But so much higher in Glory, than the spotless Inhabitants of Heaven, was this MAN, *inasmuch as He hath obtained a more excellent Name than they.*

For unto which of the Angels said God at any Time, thou art my Son. Of the Angels He saith, they are Ministers, but unto the Son He saith, Thy Throne ^{O God} is for ever and ever. And to strengthen our Faith in this great Truth, that in this Man, the Fullness of the GODHEAD dwelt bodily. That though he humbled Himself to appear in the form of a Servant, of a Malefactor, whom the World judged not fit to live, He was still the MAN, that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts. ~~Isaiah~~ ^{Isaiah} XLIII. 7.

To justify and strengthen our Faith in this Truth, the whole Creation, inanimate, rational and spiritual, paid absolute Homage to Him. The Winds and the Waves, Sickness and Death, the Devil and the Host

Host of unclean Spirits listed under his Banner, so instantly obeyed the Word of his Mouth, that the People who saw Him in the Flesh, though He was of the meanest Parentage and Education, marvelled, saying, Behold ! what Manner of Man is this ?

In short, no Perfection either natural or moral was in the Father, which was not also in this MAN, so really and without all Limitation, that he said to Philip, ignorant of his Glory, *Have I been so long with you, and hast thou not known me Philip ? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.*

But if this is the Case, it may be said, it is the Divinity, and not the Humanity, that should be held forth to us. And this marvellous Assertion of Scripture, that a *Man shall be as an hiding Place from the Wind, and a Covert from the Tempest,* should be changed. Since it is indeed and in truth, the GODHEAD, that dwelt in Him, which enables Him to fulfil this Promise.

It would be so, if Christ had not taken part of our Flesh, before He could become Emmanuel, *i. e.* GOD with us.

If

If the Things which He performed, and which He suffered in the Body, had not been the procuring Cause of every Grace his Church receives, and of all the Blessings of Righteousness and Salvation, which are unto all, and upon all them that believe.

It was as Man, *he magnified the Law, and made it honourable*, by his consummate Obedience, to the utmost of its Demands. It was as Man, He shed his Blood, which cleanses from all Unrighteousness. The whole Communion between the Faithful and their Divine Head, is established in his being Man and God in one Christ, as it is Written, *Forasmuch as the Children are Partakers of Flesh and Blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.* Heb. ii. 14. *In all Things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest, in Things pertaining to God, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People.* Heb. ii. 17.

Behold then the MAN! what Manner of Person He is, of whom the Text speaks! He shall be called Wonderful,--- for though born a Child, and growing up as a Root out of a dry Ground, yet was
He

He possessed of infinite Wisdom and Almighty Power. Of Consequence able to secure and shelter to the uttermost all whom He engages to protect. And to hide them from Fear of every Foe.

But what Foes, what Dangers, are the Children of Men exposed to, which can make an hiding-Place and Covert, impregnable as Omnipotence its self, needful for them? Do you see Mankind in general sensible that they are naturally exposed to any thing which may justly be compared to a dreadful Wind and Tempest? Or are they seeking Shelter with all impetuous Eagerness, as Men are wont to do, when the loud Thunders roar, the Lightenings flash, and the Clouds pour down Floods of Water?

It must be confessed indeed, the Unconcern of Sinners, is on the contrary most manifest, so very general as to render even this striking Representation of the Office and Protection of Christ, unintelligible. The unawakened Multitude of formal Professors, will reply when this inestimable Scripture comes before their View, what is this Wind? What is this Tempest? We know not what it means?

I proceed therefore,

II. To explain, as I propos'd, what is meant by these metaphorical yet most significant Expressions.

By the Wind and Tempest is meant, the Apprehensions of the Wrath of God, when they are first felt by the awakened Conscience. Thus Heman, when his Soul was full of Trouble, expresses his Complaint to God, intreating his Pity, *Thine Indignation lieth hard upon me, and thou hast vexed me with all thy Storms.* Psa. lxxxviii. 7. In the same distressful Apprehensions of God's Displeasure, Job expresses the Misery of his Soul, saying, *He breaketh me with a Tempest.* Job ix. 17. And not to multiply Scripture Testimonies, in order to ascertain the precise Meaning of this Metaphor. You will find the God of all Grace addressing the awakened Sinner, *as one afflicted and tossed with Tempest, whom no Man doth comfort.* Isa. liv. 11.

Now the exquisite Beauty and Strength of the Comparifion, may be illustrated by the following Considerations.

When the Wind lifts up its Voice with Violence, and the gathering Tempest threatens to discharge its Fury. How greatly does it disturb and fright the Traveller,

veller, far from any friendly Shelter, especially in Eastern Countries, where Tempests mark their Way with frequent Desolation.

Exactly similar in its Effect, is the Sense of Guilt, and the Conviction of Sin, upon the awakened Conscience. Then, thou careless Sinner, you will find as Job, the Terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against you. And though for Years past, you could laugh and make a Mock of a wounded Spirit: Wonder what Reason a Man could find to be in Fear and Dread, who never was more guilty than his Neighbour, yet when any Sense of Guilt comes to be experienced by your own Soul, in an effectual Degree, you will be perplexed and afflicted yourself. Like one, on whose defenceless Head, the enraged Elements are breaking; like one persecuted with Storm and Tempest, you will be turning your Eyes on every Side, seeking some hiding Place and Covert.

Again, The Wind and Tempest are mighty and irresistible in their Operations. What can a World do to oppose or stand before them? What can feeble Men effect, to mitigate their Rage, or avoid their

O Assault?

Affault? If they find him on the Waters of the Sea, *they carry him up to the Heaven, and down again to the Deep of the Earth.* In the extreme Agitation, *he staggers to and fro, and is even at his Wits End.* If on dry Land, in a Moment with one dreadful Blast, they can tear his Dwelling from its Foundation, and bury Him in the falling Ruin.

Equally mighty is the Power of an awakened Conscience. Not all the Artifices that Man can use can drown its Accusations, when GOD commands it to rebuke, and thunder the Sentence of his Law against the Sinner. In vain you mingle with the voluptuous and lawless Throng, in vain labour to stifle the alarming Suggestions of your Mind, by their Atheistical Maxims, *Tush, God careth not for it, is there Knowledge in the most High?* In spite of all your Pains, the dismaying Fear of Vengeance threatened to unpardoned Sin, will haunt and torment you.

So severely in many Instances has this been felt, as to bring on Sicknefs of Body, and Disorder of Mind. What! through Scruples and Melancholy raised by the Preachers of GOD's Word? No, in many
who

who were never alarmed by the powerful Manifestation of the Truth to their Consciences, through God's faithful Ministers, it is the Hand of threatening Sickness which has discovered and pointed out their Sins to them, or perhaps a Train of Misfortunes, or the sudden Loss of dear Friends, which sweetened Life itself, has stirred them up to enquire, wherefore God contends with them? Wherefore He carries Himself towards them as an Enemy and a cruel One? And whilst the Tempest raised in their Souls, instead of bringing them to intreat the Lord, to be unto them as a hiding Place, is looked on by their Friends in the Light of a melancholy Fancy, to be cured by Dissipation and larger Enjoyment of Worldly Pleasures; whilst the charge of Sin from God's own Law, enforced by the Testimony of Conscience, they hear esteemed, as Scruples favouring of Enthusiasm; having no Friend to disclose their Anguish to, so insufferable is the Tempest, that it has sometimes ended in Distraction.

The last Particular I shall mention, to shew you the Beauty of comparing the Sensations of an awakened Conscience, to

the Wind and Tempest, is this : Both are equally sudden and unexpected.

Oftimes in the Morning not a Cloud is to be seen in the Face of the whole Heavens. The wayfaring Man travels on rejoicing in the promised Calm and Sunshine. The Peasant gladly goes forth to his Work, and to his Labour in the Field. Presently the Lord ^{blow} ~~blow~~eth with his Wind, and the horrid Storm comes on. The Birds, the Beasts, hasten to find some Shelter, whilst all Things are oppressed by the Violence of the disturbed Air.

Just so it is with the Consciences of Men. When the Sinner is saying to himself, Come on I will enjoy myself to the full, I will withhold my Heart from no Joy. When full of Scoffs at the righteous Government and Law of God, of Contempt and Hatred, toward the few that live in dutiful Subjection to it, an Arrow from the Almighty sticks fast in his Mind. His Terror suddenly makes them afraid. By some special Providence, or immediately by God's own Spirit, without the Concurrence of any Human Means, the Ears which were deaf to the Words of God's Book are unstopped, and the Eyes
which

which were blind are opened to see, Sin not a venial Infirmary, but a deadly Evil slaying the Souls of Men.

Immediately Conscience works, and is tempestuous. Presumption is all vanished, as a Dream when one awakeneth. Doubts, Fears, painful Anxiety what must be done to recover Peace of Mind, and a calm within take up all the Sinner's Thoughts.

The most inveterate and hardened Offenders against God, and their own Souls, have often thus been overtaken, when God has been pleased to send the Commandment with Light and Power, and to rebuke them by the Spirit of Judgment. Then, though entrenched ever so deeply in Worldly Pursuits; fortified ever so strongly by prophane Principles; it will bring down your high Looks and stout Hearts. God's accusing Law, will apprehend and fasten itself upon you, whether you will or not, and make a hiding Place and a Covert, the Thing that you long for.

With the greatest Part of Mankind, I allow, it is never so in this Life. They do despite alas! to the Spirit of Grace. But where the Conscience is truly awakened, and who would not devoutly wish to know

the worst of Himself, and no longer live in a false deceitful Peace? Where the Conscience is truly awakened, there is no hiding Place or Covert, where ^{true} Peace can be enjoyed, and that Calm of an enlightened Mind, far better than Life itself, but under the Shadow of the Wings of this MAN, whom my Text holds forth. Other Refuges are always indeed first tried, but where there is Sincerity of Heart they never are, they never can, be found sufficient.

You say I have sinned, I have provoked God, He is angry with me, I will therefore amend my Ways, and do no more so wickedly. It is a noble Resolution, and God enables you to keep it. Now you find a Change for the better, and think your Obedience will soon, be now a Defence and Refuge for your Soul. But as you go on in this Way of ^{Repentance} ~~Urgency~~, Sin begins to appear. Sin. God's Purity and Holiness, the Nature of Spiritual Religion, and the Demands of Duty from you, are better understood. You remember afresh after another Manner your past Offences; you are tormented with Fear, lest you should not have done enough to make A-
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tonement for your Faults, which really is and ever must be the Case. You do your utmost, looking with longing Eyes upon your Life, into your Thoughts and Desires, to find them altogether such, as you might place sure Confidence in as a Covering for your Transgression. If you are sincere in seeking to do the Will of God, this you never can see, nay you will appear worse in your own Eyes than before, for Light makes manifest ^{ru}Corruptions, which were concealed before through the Ignorance that was in you. Of Consequence, though you are designing to serve God with your whole Heart, and to give up all Things for his Sake, still you have not from within the Answer of a good Conscience. Distressing Apprehensions frequently have place in your Mind, as much almost as when you first begun to seek after God. You painfully feel yourself still exposed to the Wind and Tempest.

The Reason of this, is, you are looking for something done by you, or wrought in you, worthy to procure Favour for you from God. But being too much delivered, from the Infatuation of Pride and Self-love, to imagine any thing yet performed, or any

thing yet attained to by you equal to this, therefore your Soul is so heavy, and often so disquieted within you.

Now turn your Eyes from yourself, on which they have too long been fixed in an improper Manner. Run with Prayer and Faith unto *him whom God hath glorified*, and set forth as an hiding Place and Covert. Look up unto Him as enduring the Cross, and receiving in his own blessed Body on the Tree, all the fierce Anger of the Lord, which must else have been beating upon your Soul to all Eternity, for the Joy of making a Covering for your Transgressions, there is the full Demonstration of his Love. Look up to Him, as sitting on the Throne of God, there is the Demonstration of his Ability and Power to shelter you. Examine his Excellency, the Design of his Undertakings, the Declarations of the jealous God, of their abundant Success in behalf of all Sinners, that flee unto Him as the hiding Place from the Storm and Tempest of deserved Indignation. Strive to commit your Soul into the Hands of Christ, as your Advocate, Mediator, and Propitiation. Take it not for granted you have done so already, depend now as
much

much upon Him as the Atonement full and perfect for your Sins, as you would have done on your own Performances, had you seen them every Way equal to your Duty, and worthy to delight the pure Eyes of God. Then you shall find Peace and Safety, that you stand within the Protection, and under the Shadow of a Divine Covert, the more you search and examine the Defence it affords, the more satisfied will you be of the Security of your Situation.

And now you may look into yourself, with Joy to find your personal Obedience and Holiness a *sufficient Witness* of your Sincerity, in hearing the Voice of Christ, and following Him; a sufficient Foundation to conclude you certainly belong to Him, though less than nothing, when pleaded as any Atonement and Reconciliation for Iniquity. Now persuaded it cost more to make Atonement for the least Sin, than you know Angels could offer unto God, you will honour the great High-Priest of our Profession, in his Person, Undertakings, and Office, with the Honour you before was desirous to give to the Works of your own Hands, and to the Virtues of your own

own Character. The happy Consequence will be humble Boldness before GOD, and a drawing near to Him in full Assurance of Faith, having your Heart sprinkled from an Evil Conscience, by the Blood of Jesus. This MAN will be as an hiding Place and Covert, from all Apprehensions of the Anger of GOD, and from all tormenting Fears of his Displeasure.

It was said that the greater Part of Mankind know not ever what it is to be so troubled in Mind through Dread of GOD's Wrath, as to seek after any Refuge. They frequently die in a settled Denial of GOD's Government and the Word of his Truth. Consequently in the first Meaning of the Metaphorical Expression, Wind and Tempest, they are not included.

But though they pass all their Days without a Fear of GOD's Wrath; without being able ever to understand it possible, to be afflicted and tossed with Tempest of Conscience, unless a Man has been scandalous in Sin: However Men may go down in Peace to their Graves, as a Shock of Corn in his Season, *shall they escape for their Wickedness? Thou O God shalt cast them down.* They are not, they cannot be,

out

out of the Reach of a far more dreadful Wind and Tempest, than the Fears and Terrors of Conscience. For the Day cometh when the Punishment of the Despisers and Enemies of God, shall be so overwhelming, unexpected, and disastrous, that He hath Himself represented it by the terrible Image of Wind and Tempest. *Upon the Wicked he shall rain Snarés, Fire, and Brimstone, and an horrible Tempest.* Psa. xi. 6. *The Adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to Pieces, out of Heaven shall he thunder upon them.* 1 Sam. ii. 10. The very same Image is much more amplified by Solomon, and with such Strength, and Beauty as disparages the most adorned Descriptions in the Classic Writers. *Then in the Day of the Lord, shall the right-aiming Thunder Bolts go abroad, and from the Clouds as from a well drawn Bow, shall they fly to the Mark, to the devoted Sinner, and Hailstones full of Wrath shall be cast as out of a Stone Bow, yea a mighty Wind shall stand up against them, and like a Storm shall blow them away.* Wis. v. 21.

In the New Testament which constantly uses the Images and Languages of the Old, our Lord describes the miserable End of the

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Unbelieving and Disobedient, by the Metaphor in the Text. *Every one that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish Man, which built his House upon the Sand, and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and great was the Fall thereof.* Mat. vii. 26. 27.

Here my Brethren upon this Wind and Tempest would I fix your most solemn Attention. Think with yourselves, at what most interesting Scenes infinitely above the reach of Language to describe, we must all be present. Hark! the Voice of the Arch-Angel, and the Trump of God, have sounded. Every Island and Mountain, the whole Earth, the Sea, the Air, are shaken, convulsed, and pass away, in the horrible Tempest. Where shall we appear? How make our Hearts strong amidst such Sight, such Scenes of desolating Vengeance? When God cometh *to lay Judgment to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummets*. How, how shall we be sheltered so that none of this Wrath shall fall upon us? Will your own Goodness and Virtue think you, be a covering strong enough to bear the Weight and Fury of the incumbent Storm?

Storm? Just as much as the Shepherd's Cot, or the Lodge in the Garden of Cucumbers, which the first Blast of Wind carries before it, for no sooner shall Inquisition be made, than innumerable Defects and Blemishes shall appear in your best Performances, and a Multitude of Transgressions, little in your own Eyes, will then glance with Guilt, and foul Contempt of God and Duty, leaving you of Consequence exposed to Wrath, if you have no other Shelter to stand under, than that which your own Virtue and Obedience can afford you.

Will imploring even with strong Cries and Tears, the Protection of Mercy, that encouraging Perfection in GOD, MERCY, be as an hiding Place to the Sinner? Yet, so long as the acceptable Time, the Day of Salvation is prolonged, but in the great Waterfloods, no Sinner can be safe in the supposed necessary Actions of this Attribute, because Wrath as well as Mercy come from GOD, and his Indignation *resteth* upon Sinners. At this Hour, if never before, all Men shall see, that Mercy like the Exaltation desired for Zebedee's Children, shall be given only to them for whom it is pre-

prepared, not to the Lawless, the Disobedient, and Unbelieving.

Will Millions and Millions of the Rich, and the Learned, be any Defence when banded together against the Storm? Just as much as an Heap of Chaff, before the Wirlwinds of the South. Whilst in the Body they could sometimes deaden the Convictions of Conscience, and embolden each other in Sin and Wickedness: But alas! how is the brazen Brow of Impudence and Atheism now confounded? They that made a Mock of Faith and Grace, whose Voice was wont to spirit up the Company of the Ungodly, now spends itself in vain, by calling on the Mountains and the Rocks to cover them from the Wrath of the Lamb.

Seeing then none of these Things, no Human Virtue, nor the uncovenanted Mercy of God, nor the Multitude of Sinners, can be any Refuge for the Soul, when the Wrath of God, like a mighty Wind and Tempest, *is stirred up round about*, O! show me the Means, the Place of absolute Safety, that I may run unto it as a Tower, and be hid from all these Storms that are coming upon Men!

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The appointed Means of Safety, the Place of absolute Security God Himself in my Text holds forth. *Behold*, says He, *a King shall Reign in Righteousness, and a Man* (the Hebrew is that MAN) *shall be as an hiding Place from the Wind, and a Covert from the Tempest.*

By Nature, by Office, by Inclination, He is every Way qualified to protect and save his People. As a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, to use an Illustration of his own, so will the Lord stand round about them, to save them from the Violence of the Wind and Tempest. He is the Advocate that is worthy to plead for Sinners, who with true Repentance and Faith have fled to Him. He is worthy to make Intercession for such Transgressors, because He is set forth as a Propitiation for Sin, such an all-sufficient One, as God cannot but accept, and be well pleased with. The Power of Jesus, and the Truth of his Promises must fail, before any Plague or Executioner of Vengeance can hurt so much as a Hair of his redeemed Ones. Heaven and Earth shall pass away with a great Noise, whilst his Faithfulness and Truth they shall be for
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immoveable Bulwarks to his People!

A more compleat Protection from every Evil and every Danger, cannot be imagined, then will be over all those before whom this MAN, presenting them in one Body to the Father, shall say, *Behold! me, and the Children whom thou hast given me Father, I will that where I am, they may be also.*

Immediately their eternal Security, through the infinite Strength of their hiding Place and Covert, shall be proclaimed in the Presence of Men and Angels, in some such Declarations we may conceive as these. *Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of GOD's Elect? It is GOD that justifieth. Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right Hand of GOD, who also maketh Intercession for us. Who was dead and is alive again, and liveth for ever more, to be the Author of eternal Salvation to them that obeyed Him.*

The peculiar and distinguishing Character of those happy Persons, who shall thus be hid and eternally secured by the mighty Protection of this MAN. I proceed to point out

You will not wrong me therefore so much, as to suppose, I can have any Pleasure, in limiting and confining this only
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hiding Place and Covert. Believe me, I am compelled by the Truth of God, when I tell you, in the Words of this MAN, *few there be* that will find him as a hiding Place, and Covert to their Souls.

Jesus will never be your Protector who have lived and died in the Service, and under the Defilement of vile Lusts and Affections. For this to his infinite Shame, would be making himself a Defence for the Children of the Devil, and a Sanctuary to those whose very Principles and Practices are an Abomination unto God. This would be to encourage all possible Presumption and Continuance in Sin. For who would ever lay his Transgressions to Heart, sorrowing for them with a Godly Sorrow, and detesting them as his worst Enemies, whilst he supposes, he shall find Shelter under the Wings of the Almighty Saviour, though taken away in the Love and Practice of Iniquity? To entertain such an Imagination, is to blaspheme Christ as the Minister and Encourager of Sin. Hearken ye that are thus deluded, to the real unchangeable Character of the Man in whom ye madly trust, whilst ye rebel against his Government. *Behold!*

I send an Angel before Thee, to keep Thee in the Way, and to bring Thee into the Place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his Voice. Provoke him not for he will not pardon your Transgressions, for my Name is in him. Ex. xxiii. 20. 21.

Jesus will not be your Protector, who under the Glare of zealous Profession, may even of many Labours for advancing his Kingdom amongst Men, remain in secret attached to some beloved Lust. For in that Day, when he shall be glorified in his Saints, and admired by all them that believe as their Defence and Covert; many says he, *Shall come and say unto me, Lord have we not prophesied in thy Name, eaten and drank in thy Presence, cast out Devils, and wrought many mighty Works. Then will I say unto them, depart from me, I never knew you, ye Workers of Iniquity.* Nay, though you are harmless and inoffensive before Men, if you are no more; if no true Love to God warms your Heart, and makes you active in Obedience, Jesus will not be your hiding Place and Covert. For the five Foolish Virgins, who were unblameable touching their outward De-
meanor, when they would fain have entered

Under his Defence and Refuge, found the Door for ever shut against them.

Least of all, will Jesus be your Protector, if you trust in yourself as righteous; if you go about to establish your Sobriety and Honesty, Charity and Devotion, as a sufficient Recommendation of yourself to God. *For so many as are of the Works of the Law, are under the Curse. Gal. iii. 10. Christ shall profit them nothing.* The same Scriptures which hold forth the Son of God, under the Image of an hiding Place and Covert, continually declare, *By Grace are ye saved through Faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God, not of Works least any Man should boast. Ephe. ii. 8. 9.*

Ponder now these Scriptures, compare them with the professed Hopes, and the open Practice of Men; and say whether they are more than a few, who shall be hid under the Wings of this MAN, and find his Faithfulness and Truth their Refuge? Whether the Multitude of Sinners, are not evidently of that Spirit and Disposition, against which God hath sworn in his Wrath, that it shall never escape his avenging Justice?

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The Few who are the highly-favoured Objects of the Redeemer's Love and Protection, as he himself describes them. John x: 27. *Hear his Voice and follow him.* Hear every Precept, and receive every Doctrine in his Scripture, as the very Words that proceeded out of his Mouth, with all Submission, and Readiness of Mind, as from an unerring Teacher. They hear to practice, not to dispute; to be more different from others, in their Behaviour towards God and Man, then in their Sentiments. Thankful for his Sacrifice, glorying in his Cross, they abide in Christ, as their City of Refuge, and his Words abide in them.

These he is not now ashamed to call his Friends, his Brethren. These, when his Glory shall appear, shall shine through the Honour he will put upon them, and be filled with all his Fullness.

From what has been said, learn to reverence the Son of God. The eternal Father knowing his infinite Worth, and your infinite Need of Him, saith, *They will surely reverence my Son.* The most provoking Sin, here chargeable on Man, and which is indeed the Root of all others, is

despising and rejecting him. Saying, by your Actions, and the Thoughts of your Heart, this MAN shall not reign over us. But remember, if you will not in this Life, submit to him with all Gladness as your King and Saviour, in the next, you must find him your everlasting Enemy and Avenger. Go and ask of the Sinners of Jerusalem, and they will teach you. *Not this Man*, said they, *but Barabbas the Robber*. Not this Man say you, but the World. And now behold, in little more than half a Century, the Wind and Tempest of God's Wrath came upon these Despisers of his dear Son; destroyed their Temple, abolished their Kingdom, and has been beating upon their Posterity to this Hour.

In much less Time, the Wrath of the same incensed God, if you persist, and are found out of Christ, may overtake you, without any Place to flee unto, to hide yourself. You must then remain a wretched Monument of Sin, rendered absolutely incurable, through your own Pride and Presumption. *Kiss therefore the Son, lest he be angry.* Seek above all Things, to be recon-

reconciled to him, lest you perish from the right Way.

You, who (as St. John expresses the Believer's Character) are in him that is true.

Often recollect, the Uneasiness, the Fears, you have felt, lest the Indignation of God should abide on you. Remember how ineffectual all your Attempts were, to gain solid Peace of Mind, till you fled for Refuge to this MAN, who is given for the Sanctuary of every Sinner, afflicted in Conscience, and troubled through a deep Concern, for the Salvation of his Soul. Be frequent in contemplating the blessed Change of your Condition, and the inviolable Protection promised to you, whilst you continue willing and obedient. Let much of your devout Exercises be employed in searching out, all that is declared in Scripture, concerning this hiding Place and Covert, under which you stand. Survey, the sure Foundation it is built upon, the infinite Cost with which it was erected; its impregnable Strength against every Assault. And then, fired with active Gratitude, and Love unfeigned, your Soul will magnifie the Lord by every Expression of dutiful Sub-
 P 4 jection,

jection, and your Spirit rejoice in God your Saviour. And when the *mighty Thunderings, and Hail, and Fire from the Lord, shall smite throughout all the Land of Egypt, Exod. ix. 29.* You shall be with the whole Israel of God in the Land of Goshen, where *only* there is no Hail.



S E R.

S E R M O N IX.

On Simon the Pharisee, and the
Woman that was a Sinner.

LUKE vii. 36.

*And one of the Pharisees desired Jesus, that
he would eat with him. And he went
into the Pharisee's House and sat down to
meat.*

WE have few Instances upon Record,
of any amongst the Pharisees, de-
siring to hold any friendly Intercourse with
the Redeemer. Some of them grossly
hypocritical in their Profession of the
strictest Piety, and all of them cor-
rupted by a proud self-righteous Spirit;
they were ever disputing with Jesus. They
were

were bitter Enemies to him, all the Time of his public Ministry, and the very Persons who at last brought the Guilt of his Blood upon their Heads.

One of these, however, more open to Conviction than the rest, and somewhat affected with the Charge, our Lord had just brought against them, for rejecting John the Baptist, and vilifying him on Account of the great Austerity of his Life and Manners, whilst at the same Time they reproached himself, for his Courtesy and Affability to all. *One of them desired that Jesus would eat with him.*

And Jesus, not knowing what Resentment, or angry Prejudice meant, accepts the Invitation, and sat down to meat. *And behold*, an Incident, the most extraordinary that could happen. *A Woman, that was a Sinner*, in a most notorious and infamous Degree, *when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's House*, came unto him. Well she understood the haughty Spirit of the Man and of his Sect, who had invited our Lord to his Table; that he would look upon her with scornful Disdain, and think his very Dwelling defiled, by her Entrance within his Doors. But notwithstanding these

these discouraging Circumstances, she could not but venture, forcibly drawn by her supreme Veneration and Love to Jesus, by whom the Eyes of her Understanding had been enlightened to know her Transgressions; the Way of Mercy and Salvation pointed out, and a once lewd and most lascivious Woman, brought to seek after Purity of Heart. And as she feared some Ceremonies of Respect towards Jesus Christ might be omitted, by one who had no great Regard for him; she determined herself, to perform those little Festal Rites, which were usual and most agreeable in a hot Eastern Country, though utterly unknown in our colder Climate. For this Purpose, *she brought with her an Alabaſter Box of Ointment*, by its reviving Fragrancy to refresh his Senses. And having gained Admittance, she did not presume, though a Person of some Fortune, as is generally supposed, she did not presume to sit with Jesus at the Table; but, as if worthy only to perform the Offices of a Servant, *she stood at his Feet*, behind the Couch on which he was reclined, and *began to wash his Feet with Tears*. Tears, of great Price, because they flowed from a broken and a
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contrite Heart; from an ingenuous Sorrow for Sin, and a lively Sense of that rich Grace, which strongly encouraged her to hope, she should receive Pardon and Absolution for all her Sins.

And the better to express her profound Reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ, that she held nothing too good to be employed for his Convenience. She wipes his Feet clean, with the principal Ornament of her Beauty; and those disshevelled Locks, which by their elegant Dressing, had so often been spread, to catch the Eyes of loose Admirers, are now religiously employed to dry his Feet, from whose Paths she had so greatly wandered. *She wiped them with the Hair of her Head, and kissed his Feet, and anointed them with the Ointment*; which though costly, and therefore enclosed in Alabaster, she presumed not to pour on his sacred Head, esteeming it but good enough, to anoint his hallowed Feet. In these remarkable, and very submissive Ways, did this Woman express her vehement Gratitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying this

this Man, if he were a Prophet, would have known who, and what Manner of Woman this is, that toucheth him, for she is a Sinner

Something inclined he was from the Works, which Jesus had done, to believe till now, that he was sent of God. But this, his allowing one so vile and infamous in her past Life, to anoint his Feet, was a full Proof to him of his Mistake. Had Jesus indeed been the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, in that extraordinary Manner which was given out, he must have been possessed, the Pharisee concluded, with Discernment of Spirits, ; and of Course have known, if he had not been informed by Report, all the Impurities, and scandalous Iniquity of this Woman. And then he concluded, he must have treated her with the same Disdain, which he himself thought, so justly to be her due. Instead of suffering any Thing approaching towards even a civil Behaviour to her, or allowing her so much as to touch his Garment. He was persuaded he would sharply have rebuked her, saying, stand by thou vile and reprobate Woman, *for I am holier than thou.*

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Thus reasoned the Pharisee within himself, though he was not bold enough to speak out his Sentiments. Little did he think the Guest he had invited to his Table, had Eyes like a Flame of Fire, searching the very Secrets of every Heart; and was one to whom all Thoughts are known, long before the Tongue can give them Utterance. To convince him of this, *Jesus*, answering the Objection just formed by the Pharisee in his own Mind, said unto him, *Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.* And he said, *Master, say on.*

There was a certain Creditor which had two Debtors. By the Creditor, is meant the Great and Eternal God, to whom we are all indebted, for not paying to him, what we owe, as his Creatures, and much more as his redeemed Ones, the Debt of perfect Love and sinless Obedience. *The one owed him five hundred Pence, the other fifty.* By the former is meant, every Person, who to the common universal Guilt of Carelessness, Forgetfulness, and Contempt of God in many Instances, has added scandalous Iniquities; declared his Sin as Sodom; and been a Seducer and Corrupter of others.

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By the Debtor which owed fifty Pence, only a tenth Part of the larger Sum, is meant every Person, who through the Benefit of early Instruction, pious Education, and restraining Grace, has been always regular and sober, and never defiled with any Offences, gross in the Eyes of the World. *And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.* No sooner have you broke God's Law, whether in few or more Particulars; in less, or greater Sins; by Thought and Desire, or by open Practice; then you become equally incapable of making any Payment, that can satisfy your Creditor. The little Sinner, or the great, can be pardoned only by the same Act of Free Grace in God. *And it is said, When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.* To teach you, that so long as you go about to establish the Merit of your Righteousness, or proudly Fancy any Thing that can be done by you, and be found in you, will be received in Part of Payment: Your Debt still remains uncanceled. It is not till you own the Demands of God's Law upon you, for Obedience in Time past, can in no wise be answered by you; till you perceive

an utter Impossibility, of making any Composition for your Debt; it is not, till this is the abiding Persuasion of your Heart, that you can be ever forgiven, whether you are a little or a great Sinner.

And when they had nothing to pay; no Plea to offer in Justification of themselves; no Excuse from the Frailty of human Nature; the Strength of Temptations, and from ballancing some Instances of Obedience against their Faults. He frankly forgave them both, out of the mere Goodness of his Nature, who is the Lord, merciful and gracious. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most.

Simon the Pharisee, no more perceiving the Application which our Lord designed to make of this Parable, than David did, when Nathan the Prophet was sent to him. *Simon answered and said, I suppose, that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned from the Table to the Woman, that was behind him, and said unto Simon, seest thou this Woman? Whom in your Heart you disdain; whom you think far beneath the Notice of every good Man; and on Account of my Suffering her to approach me,*
and

and express her profound Reverence to me in your House; you have already determined within yourself, that I am a vile Impostor, and no true Prophet. *Seest thou this Woman? I entered into thine House, and though at your own particular Invitation, as if it was Honour enough to be admitted into your Presence; Thou gavest me no Water for my Feet, but she infinitely exceeding the Bounds of mere Civility, has shewn me the utmost Marks of Gratitude. She has washed my Feet with Tears, and wiped them with the Hairs of her Head.*

Thou gavest me no Kifs. The usual Manner of expressing Friendship, in the Eastern Countries. In this most common Ceremony of Civility you have been wanting, and treated me with a rude Neglect. *But this Woman, on whom you look down with such Scorn, since the Time that I came in, has not ceased to kiss my very Feet.*

My Head with Oil thou didst not anoint. But this Woman at whom you have taken such high Offence, hath anointed my Feet with Ointment.

Now in order to teach you, the real Cause of that very great Difference of Treatment I have met with, from yourself, and from her; and of those strange Ex-

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pressions of her Love to me. *I say unto thee, her Sins which are many, great in Guilt, and repeated Times without Number, I allow; nay so scandalous, as to make her in Time past justly avoided, and deserving of the severest Reproach. Her Sins which are many are forgiven.*

For as I live saith the Lord I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth. Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Yea though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be made White as Snow, though they be as Crimson, they shall be as Wool.

Now according to these free and gracious Promises, her Sins which are many, upon her true and hearty Repentance, and lively Faith in me, are now no more imputed to her.

Οτι ηγαπησεν πολυ. *Therefore she has loved much,* “for this Interpretation the Sense of the Parable absolutely requires, and the conjunctive Particle *οτι* admits though not in the pure Greek Idiom, yet in the Hellenistic Use of it *.”

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 *Pinks's Trial of sincere Love to Christ. Page 125.

It was the strong Sense, she had upon her Mind, that she was one of those Debtors, who owed five Hundred Pence, totally unable to discharge the least Part of it. It was her clear Perception, that she was in Danger on this Account of being thrust into that Prison of Torment, from which there is no release; and in this alarming, guilty State of Mind, receiving the joyful Tidings, which I have so often and so publicly proclaimed, saying, *If any Man thirst, let him come and drink.* John vii. 37. It was this News, a soothing Balm to her wounded Spirit, and a Ground of Hope to her Self-condemning Conscience. It was this my Gospel, which transported her into all those extraordinary Expressions of regard for me, which you have seen, and been so much disgusted with.

But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

The Reason on the contrary, of all the Incivilities and Neglect I have met with from you, is that your Offences in your own partial Estimate of them, are small and inconsiderable. Your good Deeds you think either over-balance your bad ones, or that your own personal Obedience and Righte-

ousness, is very near sufficient to obtain Salvation.

Thus blinded through Pride and Self-Love, *supposing* you have little to be forgiven, of Consequence you conclude, a little Degree of Affection and Regard to the Saviour, as much as is his Due. For the Sense of Obligation and Gratitude, will ever bear exact Proportion to your own estimate of your Demerit and Sinfulness. By your Answer therefore to the Case proposed, of the Creditor and the two Debtors, you have yourself justified this Woman's Behaviour towards me, and given at the same Time the true Reason of the Rudeness of your Treatment of me.

And he said unto her thy Sins are forgiven. The Woman could not but be under much Confusion, and painful Perplexity of Mind, whilst the Eyes of the whole Company were fixed upon her: And Jesus was vindicating both her Conduct and his own. Therefore to give her the strongest Consolation and Encouragement: To assure her, it was no Presumption to conclude she was passed from Death unto Life; from a State of Wrath and Condemnation, into a State of Favour and Acceptance: With that

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Authority which became the Saviour, and with that Tendernefs of Affection peculiar to himself, he fully confirmed all her Hopes, and gave her assuredly to know from his own Mouth, that she had nothing to fear from any thing that was past. *He said unto her thy Sins are forgiven, they are now actually blotted out, and shall not be so much as once mentioned unto you.*

And they that sat at Meat with him, began to say, within themselves, who is this that forgiveth Sins also ?

The Pharisees had no Conception, that such an unspeakable Blessing as an Assurance of present Pardon, was to be enjoyed upon Earth : For being unhumbled themselves, and Strangers to the Power of Godliness, they could not know how effectually God healeth those that are broken in Heart, and comforts such as truly mourn for their Sin.

Besides this, they had the strongest Objections to make to the Power and Authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, *Who is this that forgiveth Sins also ?* It is not the Voice of a Man, but of a God, to say thy Sins are forgiven. *But is not this the Carpenter ? the Son of Joseph and Mary ? is it*

not Jesus of Nazareth? They were incensed therefore at Him, as arrogating a Prerogative which did not belong to him, for who can forgive Sins except God alone?

Through the Blindness of their Hearts, they beheld not his Glory, nor at all understood that he was, *God manifest in the Flesh*. And as they were not disposed to receive this great Truth, it seemed good to our Lord, to leave the Objection they conceived in their own Hearts against him for this Speech, unanswered; and to bring no Proof from Scripture, to show them wherefore he spake in this God-like Manner to the Woman before him.

He said to the Woman, thy Faith hath saved thee, go in Peace. Thy humble and entire Trust and Confidence in me, as the Christ of God, sent into the World to call Sinners to Repentance, *to seek and to save that which was lost*. Thy Dependance on me, as sufficient in my Power, Grace, and Merit, to pardon and absolve, and present you righteous before the Father, hath saved thee. Now, even now, it has saved thee from the Curse of the Law; from the Wrath of God; from the Do-
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minion of those abominable Lusts which had well nigh destroyed your Soul for ever. *Go in Peace.* Be not shaken or perplexed in your Mind, by any thing you have heard the Pharisees object and cavil. Abide in that lively comfortable Assurance that your Sins are pardoned, which my Word, who am Truth it self, demands from you.

And no Doubt this Woman departed in Peace, no more tormented with the Sting of unpardoned Guilt. No Doubt she departed from his Presence with a Heart delivered from all Dread of God's avenging Justice, though filled with utter Abhorrence and Detestation of her Sins. No Doubt from hence forward, *the Love of Christ constrained her*, and sanctified all her Affections, Desires, and Thoughts. The Harlot became pure in Heart, a living Witness of the Grace and Power of her great Redeemer, all her Days upon Earth; till in due Time she was exalted to fall down before him, with Saints and Angels, having washed her Robes white in the Blood of the Lamb.

From this edifying Portion of Scripture, there are three important and most useful Instructions to be gathered.

I. That the worst of Sinners shall assuredly obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help and save their Souls, *immediately* upon their Penitent Application for it to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. That they who love him in Sincerity, may *know* that they *are* pardoned and accepted.

III. That the Reason why there is so little real Love amongst Men, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and so little Obedience to his Gospel, is the proud Opinion Men have of their own Virtue and Goodness.

The first Instruction evidently taught us in this Scripture, is that the worst of Sinners shall assuredly obtain Pardon and Grace, whenever they in earnest seek for it in Prayer to Christ. This is a Matter the Careless and Presumptuous, I know, never question. They strengthen one another, with the blasphemous Conceit that there is *such* Mercy with God, as will even save Men dying in their Sins. To them I am not now speaking. I am addressing myself to you, whose Hearts tremble at the Remembrance of what you committed against God for Years, perhaps, without Fear or Remorse. Who are thinking of a Return to God, but alas! the Way seems

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utterly obstructed. Your Sins so very many and provoking. Their Stain so deep, that you are ready to conclude either it is too late, or at least to think so much must be done, before ever you can attain to any comfortable Hope of your Reconciliation, that you are quite disheartened, and made desperate as it were, to take all that Sin can give, to risque all it can bring upon you. But in all these Thoughts you show yourself sadly ignorant of the Gospel of Christ. A Way far more easy and inviting is prepared, walk then in it. Behold! I intreat you, the Behaviour of the Son of God, to one of the vilest of Sinners. Understand, not by Inference and Deduction only from his most faithful Declarations and Promises, but from this and other *Facts*, to what low Degrees of Condescension He stoops? See with what amazing Tenderness he will receive you, returning in the Way of Repentance and Faith?

This Woman, with others as notorious Sinners, *are set forth as an Example to them that should hereafter believe.* They are, as it were the Proclamation, published by the King of Heaven, to be read and known by the worst of Rebels. A Proclamation which cries with a Voice truly

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GOD-like, behold! the wonderful Things, which the Grace of God in Christ Jesus, can do! What Manner of Sinners it can reclaim, sanctify, and save! What Sins it can freely pardon! What abominable Transgressors it can embrace with the Arms of Mercy, when they smite upon their Breasts, in Repentance and Faith, crying GOD be merciful to us Sinners.

GOD move your Hearts by the Riches of such Grace. Embolden you to draw nigh to him in Prayer, who have till now been kept off, affrighted by the Number, or Enormity of your past Offences. Remember, (and be infinitely thankful) that if you desire the Heart-felt Repentance, the self-loathing Spirit, and the full Trust in the Son of GOD, which were in this Woman; Jesus Christ in the Temper of his Heart toward the chief of Sinners, *is the same Yesterday, to Day, and for ever.*

Heb. xiii. 8. Destitute of every other Plea, this Instance of this Woman, still remains with you; and the more closely you compare your own, with her Circumstances, the more will you see there is yet Hope; and desperate as your Case is, a certain

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Remedy for your Cure and Salvation, if you will duly use it.

II. You may certainly infer from this Scripture, that God in such an abundant Manner pardoneth and absolveth every Sinner, truly repenting and unfeignedly believing his Gospel, that he may be assured he is actually received into a State of Grace and Favour. It would doubtless have been a Mercy worthy of God, if such a lewd and vile Offender as this Woman, had been saved in the Article of Death, as it were by Fire, after she had submitted to the Hair-cloth and the Cell, and all the most rigorous Discipline of Popish Pennance. It would have displayed the Glory of God, in forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin. Although this Woman had been left from the Time she began to repent, and to forsake her Sins, under fearful Apprehensions and tormenting Doubts, whether she should ever be pardoned or not? She, and such as she was, one would have concluded, must have been the last of all People, to whom such an inestimable Blessing, as an Assurance of present Pardon, would have been afforded. Yet to her, when he saw in her a broken and contrite Heart, to her said the

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Saviour, *Thy Sins are forgiven, go in Peace.* He commanded her to dismiss all miserable Forebodings, least the Wrath of God, so long provoked, so richly deserved, should be executed upon her. And to regard herself as one who was freely justified and acquitted from all her past Guilt. So that with Respect to the Punishment of it in herself, it was passed away, as though it had never been.

Now this is particularly mentioned, even in a Case to our Judgment the most unlikely; to teach us that *Forgiveness of Sins*, is a Benefit which stands at the very Entrance into the Way of Life, as an Earnest and Pledge of those many inestimable Blessings, which are to be received as we proceed therein. It was nothing singular, or above what other Sinners were encouraged and rejoiced with, when the Son of God assured this Woman of her immediate Acceptance with God. Zaccheus, though a Publican, was told that very Day, in which he received the Son of God, *Salvation was come to his House.* The bloody persecuting Saul, washed away all his Sins, *as soon as he was baptized, and called on the Name of the Lord.* Acts xxii. 16. The three Thousand who were *pricked to the Heart*

Heart by St. Peter's Sermon, so as to cry out, what shall we do? Acts iii. 37. were every one of them baptized for the Remission of Sins. And therefore though despised, persecuted, and miserable in every View with regard to this World, it is written, they did eat their Bread with Gladness and Singleness of Heart, praising God.

Now to suppose, the same rich invaluable Blessing, is not vouchsafed to those *at this Time*, who no less truly repent, and unfeignedly believe in the Son of God, than it was to the first Christians. Is to suppose, that in the lowest State of Humiliation, *in the Days of his Flesh*, the Lord Jesus Christ distinguished and rewarded some of his Disciples on Earth, far beyond what he does now, *though ascended up on High, having led Captivity captive, and received Gifts for Men, even for the Rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them.*

Neither is it any valid Objection against the Assurance of a present Pardon, to say, that the Redeemer is no longer visible, his Voice no longer audible to us, as it was to Zaccheus, the Woman in the Text and others. For even these Persons were soon deprived of the Power of re-

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ceiving *such* Evidence of their Pardon, if indeed it was ever repeated to them. Their sure and abiding Evidence, was the Truth and Faithfulness of him, that had said unto them, *their Sins were forgiven*. Who had solemnly engaged his Honour, that their past Iniquity should not prove their Ruin. That so long as their Faith continued to work by Love, and their Conversation such as became his Gospel, there was no Condemnation against them. Their Assurance of Forgiveness did not stand in their own Feelings, but on Christ's own Word. To this, not to an inward and invisible Testimony, they could make their Appeal, and say, we know that our Transgressions *are* blotted out, and our Sin *is* covered.

The same Evidence Rational, not Enthusiastick; Scriptural, not Imaginary; every real Penitent, and sincere Believer in Christ Jesus, has to produce for the present Pardon of his Sins. For Jesus Christ *still speaketh to us from Heaven*. It is his Voice which thus invites, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest*. Mat. xi. 28. It is as truly his Voice, as that which the Woman in
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the Text heard, which thus in the most solemn Manner, assures you of your Pardon, if you do indeed belong to Christ. *Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation, but is passed from Death unto Life.* John v. 24.

And to be thus assured of Pardon and Acceptance with the eternal God, by the uncontrollable Evidence of Scripture, always ready to be produced as a Guard against Enthusiasm and Presumption. To be thus assured your Sins are forgiven, is an incentive to increasing Obedience and Holiness of Heart and Life, powerful above every other. Such a Spring of Readiness to Duty, and Self-denial in every Instance required, as the Prodigal experienced from the more than generous Reception his much grieved Father gave him, when he *immediately* admitted him upon his Return, into all the Honours of a Child, a Son of so great a Family. This sufficient and satisfying Assurance, does not wound the Humble and Self-diffident; does not drive feeble-minded Christians, who should be cherished, to their Wits-end, and make
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sad those that walk in Darkniess, for a Season, through manifold Temptations, whilst they as much as any *fear the Lord, and bear the Voice of his Servant.* This Evidence arising from the most sure Promise of God, made to those, and only those, who receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and Honour him by faithful Obedience, leaves no Room for any unwarrantable Dependence on joyous Sensations; or any boastful Self-exaltation through them. But whilst it secures all lawful Comfort, and rejoicing in God, so necessary to wean the Heart from carnal Pleasures, or to support it, in Trouble and Adversity: It does not lead Men to trust in their own Feelings, unsupported by the Word of God, which is a Source of endless Mischiefs. The Disgrace and Ruin often of spiritual Religion, whenever it revives amongst Men.

Vindicate therefore your Priviledge, if you seek to be a Christian altogether. Maintain it as a certain inestimable Truth, as the very Life of all Spiritual Comfort, and the very Glory of the Gospel, that God hath exalted his Son, *to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Re-*
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mission of Sins, to all that believe in his Name.

III. From this Scripture we learn the true Reason of all that Indifference and Coldness towards the Lord Jesus Christ, so visible even in a Nation of professing Christians. *To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* So long as you suppose your Offences small, your Guilt trifling, and by no Means deserving the Vengeance of eternal Fire, the very Office of a Redeemer, will seem at least an arbitrary, if not a superfluous Appointment. You will take Offence at the Display of his Glory, and the pressing Enforcement of supreme Love to Christ. It must be so, till you see you have destroyed yourself by your Transgressions. Till you confess with unfeigned Sorrow, that your Debt of fifty Pence (supposing it no more) makes a *Divine Surety* absolutely necessary to discharge it. For whilst in over-weaning Conceit of your moral Honesty, and Attendance upon Publick Worship, you fancy these Things can atone for your Disobedience in other Points; or that the Uniformity of your whole Conduct, is a Righteousness which

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GOD will accept for its own Sake; the necessary Consequence is and *must be*, that you will pay little Regard to any other Atonement. And tho' informed by GOD himself, in Language that even seems to labour for Energy of Expression, that there is *a length and breadth, a height and depth of Love*, in the Mystery of Redemption: It will not move you, so much as the least present temporal Blessing. It will not affect your Heart, till you are continually persuaded there is something so base, provoking, and truly devilish, in the Sins chargeable upon you, that there could be no Remission of them, but through the shedding of the Blood of Jesus. Till you are thus persuaded, He altogether lovely, and full of Glory, as he is, can be no more to you, than a Hospital would be to blooming Youth in full Strength. Hence it comes to pass, that many possessed of the most delicate Feelings of Gratitude. Many who would sink under the Imputation of rude Contempt towards some Benefactor, of whose Bounty they have liberally shared, feel nothing execrable, nothing shameful in treating the Son of
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God, as they would blush to think even of treating, the least and lowest in the Number of their sincere Friends. In this Instance only, you shall see the Generous act as the villainous Ingrate is wont to do, grieving and injuring the Patron to whom he owes his All. But to what Cause can this Behaviour; unnatural to the noble-minded, be imputed? Why shall the smallest Instance of distinguished Love, win the Heart of the Grateful; to a Man who is his Fellow-Creature, whilst Love infinitely more costly, more free, and transcendant, towards him from Christ Jesus, shall make no visible Impression on his Heart? The Reason is this, that the Favours and Obligations conferred by the Son of God, on us poor sinful Rebels, never are nor can be really apprehended, till every Degree of Blessing and Mercy is received as Part of the Fruit of *the Travel* of the Redeemer's Soul; as the Purchase of his Life of Sorrow, and his Death of Pain. But present and future Blessings, can never be enjoyed and received in this Light, till with the Woman in the Text, your Spirit is quite humbled within you, and knowing

worse of yourself, all Things considered, then you do of others, you confess *you have much to be forgiven.*

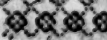
Indeed this Conviction of your own Sinfulness will be much resisted and objected to, as implying uneasy and dreadful Apprehensions of deserved Wrath. Granting it does imply these, they are not lasting. Soon upon your meek Acknowledgement of your Sin and Danger, your wholesome Sorrow shall be turned into Joy, and you will find Cause from God's Word to say, *O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me, thine Anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.* Isaiah xii. 1.

Not that this necessarily must be the Case, the Difference between the profligate and sober Part of Mankind, when they turn and seek after God, seems principally to lie in this Point. The former are generally overwhelmed with Fearfulness and an horrible Dread, that they may not turn back again to thier own Wickedness. Before Love rules in their Hearts, they are scourged for their Offences, by tormenting Fears of Hell, lest they should slip into those

those Paths, they have too long alas ! counted the only Paths of Pleasure. The latter, having been always restrained from the Commission of Enormities, are more frequently led gently on, from Grace to Grace, by Love and not by Terror. The whole necessary in either Case, whether you are a little or a great Sinner, is a real Heart-felt Sense, that you are obnoxious to the Wrath of God, revealed from Heaven against all the Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men, from which there is no other Refuge, or Way of Deliverance but Jesus Christ. And why may not both these Truths be brought to the View of the Mind together ? Why may not the Law of God convince, and the Gospel comfort together ? Like Nathan, who at once executed the Office of both, the one may bring you to confess you have sinned against the Lord, and deserve eternal Death ; whilst the other says, *Behold ! the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sin of the World, thou shalt not die.*

May God grant us all Grace, meekly to acknowledge our Vileness, that we may truly repent us of our Faults. May we

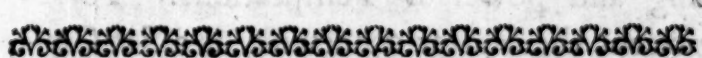
ever remember, *that if we say we have no Sin, no such Sin as deserves eternal Wrath, as can be done away only through the Blood of Christ, We deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. We are made up of Pride, Falshood, and Hypocrisy before God. But if we confess our Sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.* 1 John i. 8. 9.



XI N O M IX

S E R M O N X.

The real Christian's Character, and
inviolable Safety.



PSALM CXXI.

1. *Mine Eyes look unto the Hills, from
whence cometh my Help.*

2. *My Help cometh from the Lord, which
made Heaven and Earth.*

3. *He will not suffer thy Foot to be moved,
he that keepeth thee will not Slumber.*

4. *Behold he that keepeth Israel, shall
neither Slumber nor Sleep.*

5. *The Lord is thy Keeper, the Lord is
thy Shade, on thy right Hand.*

6. *The Sun shall not smite thee by Day,
nor the Moon by Night.*

7. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all
Evil, he shall preserve thy Soul.*

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211 8. *The Lord shall preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this Time forth, and even for evermore.*

IT must not be dissembled, that the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth Violence, and that whoever will enter therein, must encounter with and vanquish many Enemies, must withstand many very pleasing and powerful Temptations. To represent the Matter otherwise, is a flat Contradiction to Scripture, and a prophesying falsely, where Truth above all Things ought to be spoken. If it be said, such a Representation of true and saving Religion, will deter not allure; the Answer is, that sufficient Strength to endure the Assault and Combat is provided, and Encouragement most suitable and animating, plentifully afforded. Very high and peculiar Privileges are assured *now* to those, who desire to be found on the Lord's Side, Fighting against all his Enemies, and their own. And Promises which make their Victory and everlasting Triumph in Glory, absolutely certain, whilst they persevere in Faith and Holiness, are given abundantly unto them.

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This Psalm, in particular, presents us in one View with the singular Character, of every one who lives and walks by Faith, and with his peculiar Interest in the Care and Love of God.

The lovely Character and the rich Blessings annexed to it, by the most true Promise of God, deserve our closest Attention. A humble Sense of his own extreme Weakness, a Confidence in and real Experience of the Grace and Power of God, at once strongly mark and clearly distinguish the Christian, from all the World about him.

Every Man naturally is so much a Fool as to lean to his own Understanding. So conceited of his own moral Ability and Strength, that he implores no foreign Aid; so blind to the Nature of Sin, that he thinks it is as easy to atone for, as to commit. So devoted with idolatrous Affection, to the Things of the World, as to bow before them as his Idols, and court them as his Happiness. When you furnish him with the Means to gratify the Pride, and Sensuality of his Heart, you give him all he Wishes. He looks for nothing more. His Soul

Soul dead in Trespases and Sin, knows nothing of its many Enemies and its Dangers. And though shorn of all his Strength, like Sampson sleeping in the Lap of Dalilah, he remains insensible of his Loss.

On the contrary to be a Disciple of Christ, is to be converted from all this Pride and Self-sufficiency, *and become as a little Child.* Mat. xviii. 3. It is to know where you are, what you are, and whom you have to contend with. That you are in a disordered World, which despises and hates the God that made and will judge it. Yourself a fallen corrupted Creature, too blind in your Understanding, to discover Truth from specious Error; too depraved in Heart, to embrace the Good, and abhor the Evil, when discovered; too feeble to wrestle, not only against Flesh and Blood, but Enemies from without, visible and invisible.

The Believer feeling his Weakness and various Wants in all these Respects, looks not to the Earth, places no Confidence in his own Wisdom and Strength; but persuaded, *no Man can receive any Thing except it be given him from above?* I will lift up mine Eyes, saith he, unto the Hills, from whence cometh my Help. In the Posture,
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and with the Spirit of an humble and earnest Suppliant, as an unworthy Object, yet infinitely in Need of Pity and Relief: Day by Day will I lift up the Eyes of my waiting Mind, unto those lofty and eternal Hills, on which the Almighty has fixed his Throne, from whence cometh my Help, all my Strength and Power for the Battle: All my Ability to observe and do, whatsoever is commanded, all my Peace and Consolation. And whilst I wait upon the Lord in this humble Manner, *though he hath his Dwelling so high, that he even humbleth himself. to behold the Things that are in Heaven,* though compared to his Greatness and Glory, *all the Nations are before him, but as the Drop of the Bucket, and as the small Dust on the Ballance, yea less than Nothing.* Yet is this God, all Ear to hear, all Love to fulfill, the Desires of them that trust in his Mercy. Be thou ever so low and mean, it is written *He despiseth not any.* Job xxxvi. 5. Be thou as far beneath the Notice of worldly Pride, as hated Poverty can place thee; if with an awakened and faithful Mind, you are looking to the Hills, your Supplication through the Intercession of Jesus, shall
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come up as speedily, as acceptably before the God of the whole Earth, as if you were set among Princes.

This Condescension, the poorest amongst the People, experience to their great and endless Comfort, no less than others. And every Believer can say, with a Confidence not rash and presumptuous; but grounded on continual Answers to Prayer, confirmed by repeated Deliverances from Dangers, and by seasonable Supplies in Time of Need, *my Help cometh from the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth.* I look to him, and I am holpen. I trust in him, and I am not confounded. I have the Things I ask for, And each succeeding Day brings with it fresh and increasing Evidence of God's tender Love, and Guardian Power over me.

By this noble and happy Peculiarity is every real Believer separate from the World of the Ungodly. He apprehends his continual Need of the Light, the Power, the Grace of God. He makes constant Application for it, and with Assurance can say, *My Help cometh from the Lord, who made Heaven and Earth.*

To every Person, who finds himself and his Practice described in this Character,
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and to none other, is the following Promise, infinitely rich and comprehensive made; made by him who is faithful and all-sufficient. In this Manner does GOD vouchsafe to answer every Believer's sincere Profession of absolute Dependance upon him.

He will not suffer thy Foot to be moved; no Weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; no secret Wile devised beneath in Hell, shall supplant thee; no open Violence over-power thee. The Arm of the Lord shall fight against those, who fight against thee, and suffer no Temptations to turn thee aside from the Holy Commandment and the Path of Life.

He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Thy heavenly Defender, will never grow weary of affording you his full Protection; never grow indifferent to your Wants, or inattentive to your Dangers. Men alas! are deceitful upon the Weights; and though no Change from good to bad is found on your Part, they may withdraw their Affection, or they may lessen their Regard for you. To-Day you may be basking in the Smiles, and laying in the Bosom of Favour; To-morrow be rejected, and cast off, to bewail the sudden Change, no less perhaps unde-

undeserved, than unlooked for. But, *in God there is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.* The humble believing Suppliant, who hangs upon God's free and most gracious Promises, is unchangeably the Object of his tender and most watchful Care. He will never suffer you to fall a Prey to your Adversaries, for they are become his own.

Behold! consider, and be rooted and grounded in the glorious Truth. *He that keepeth Israel, will never slumber, nor sleep.* Israel is the favourite Old Testament Name for the Faithful, applied to them with great Beauty and Propriety, because they, one and all, like Jacob, who was afterwards called Israel, wrestle by earnest and importunate Prayer with the Angel of the Covenant, and obtain the Blessing. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel.* Keepeth it as his own Inheritance, as his Portion. His Eyes run to and fro through the Earth, to turn aside whatever may prove hurtful to those who honour his Word, and in whom alone he Delights, of all the Sons of Men. *He that keepeth Israel, will never slumber nor sleep.*

But as all Comfort and Confidence in the Soul, arises from the Appropriation to it-
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self, of that Love and Power to which all Things are possible : This Scripture not only asserts the controuling, ever-watchful Providence of GOD over the whole Company of the Faithful, but that each Individual of that happy Number, is as much beloved, as if he alone engaged the *whole* Protection and Attention of GOD Almighty. The Promise assures thee O Man, whose Eyes in humble constant Dependance, are looking to the GOD of all Grace. The Promise assures thee, *The Lord is thy Keeper*. Thy unspeakable Littleness, and Meanness, in Comparifon of the Objects that are before his Eyes, in the vast Immenfity of Creation, never caufe thee to be forgotten of him, even for a Moment's Space. Whilst he is upholding all Things by the Word of his Power, receiving the Adoration of Millions of Angels, and blessing them with all their incomprehenfible Felicity, the Lord will ftand round about thee, an all-fufficient Protector from every Snare and every Danger.

And, if you question this Truth, becaufe you cannot behold him vifibly prefent with you ; if you require a Sign, to remove your Unbelief. This is the Sign, whereby you
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shall know that the Lord is thy Keeper;
and thy Defence upon thy right Hand.

*The Sun shall not smite thee by Day, nor
the Moon by Night.*

It is common both with sacred and profane Writers, to represent a State of worldly Prosperity, and all its Comforts and Delights by the Metaphor of Sun-shine, which so remarkably beautifies; whilst it cheers the whole visible Creation. But as the same Sun, which is the great Instrument of Fruitfulness and Blessing to the Earth, scorches also with its burning Rays; and darts them down with a Force, often destructive to Men, especially in sultry Climates. So Prosperity, of which it is the chosen Emblem, is wont to have no less fatal Influence on the Soul. More by Millions have been ruined and brought down to eternal Death, by having Riches in Possession, than ever the Eastern Sun, with all its intolerable Fire, has smitten to the Grave. Not a Grace essential to the Christian Character, but Wealth, bears a powerful Tendency, to enfeeble, to destroy. Wealth tempts Men to deny their Misery, their Danger, and their Shame, as fallen sinful Creatures, and of Course, an absolute Dependence.

Dependence on Christ, for Righteousness and Salvation, by the Abundance with which it surrounds its Possessors; by the singular Respect, and the frequent Flattery they meet with. Wealth excites to Luxury and Sensuality, by ministering every Material, to gratify the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life. Wealth makes the Heart more selfish, and ~~and~~ intoxicates with Ambition, or the accursed Love of Money.

On these Accounts the wise Agur as earnestly prayed to be delivered from Wealth, as from the Miseries of a destitute Condition; *Give me not Riches*, says He, *lest I be full and deny thee*. On these Accounts, the Lips of the unerring One, have declared, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God*.

Yet even in these most perilous Circumstances, if you continue looking up to the Hills for Help, there shall be given unto you Power and Grace, sufficient to conquer all the Difficulties, and Enchantments of Wealth; to discover and avoid all the Temptations which beset you.

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Though rich, you shall be neither proud nor self-sufficient. No Lover of Pleasure more than God. No dishonest Steward abusing the Riches intrusted to your Care, to gratify a voluptuous, or a covetous Heart.

The Sun shall not burn Thee by Day. Riches shall have no hurtful Influence on your Soul. Though great and mighty, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you shall live as a Stranger and Pilgrim upon Earth, *i. e.* with disengaged Affections: And having tasted of the Heavenly Gift, seen the Promises afar off, been persuaded of them, and embracing them, you shall look for infinitely greater Treasures, and more durable Riches than those you now inherit.

Nor the Moon by Night; Or if your Lot is with the Poor, if Tribulation and Distress come upon you, which discouraging afflictive State, is well represented by the cold chilling Influence, and the dreary Shade of the Night. In the Midst of all your Trouble, the Lord will be your Support. He will give you Patience in Time of Adversity, and more abundantly in such trying Seasons, manifest Himself to you, as the God of Peace and Consolation.

Thus

Thus whether high or low, rich or poor, when Day by Day you look unto the Hills for Help, all Things shall work together for your Good.

The Lord shall preserve Thee from all Evil: Not from every Thing that Flesh and Blood, the foolish and unbelieving World will call Evil, for many Things which pass under that Name, are appointed as the Trials of Faith; as the Exercises, which give to Patience its perfect Work; and display the Triumphs of Grace. But from all that is really Evil, you shall be kept, *i. e.* from all that is hateful before God, and injurious to your better and immortal Part; as the Sense of the Words, is immediately explained, when it is said, *He shall preserve thy SOUL.* My Soul, saith the Believer, is myself, *my all.* Ah! what avails to have have my Body preserved; to have my Interest and Comfort in Time made secure from Danger. Soon shall my Place know me no more; soon must I go hence, naked as I was born into the World. Give me the Riches of Eternity, or I am still wretched and miserable, a Tenant at Will, and

may become in a Moment poor beyond Expression, and destitute of all Things.

The Soul is the great Object of Concern and Carefulness to every Believer. For this he seperates from the World, and dares not trifle with God, as others do ; for this he takes up his daily Cross, denies himself, watches, prays, and labours without ceasing. His Soul is the inestimable Jewel he is above all Things sollicitous to have kept from the Hands of the Destroyer, and from every Snare. So that had not the Protection and Salvation of the Soul been particularly mentioned ; all the other Promises, would have been of no more Value in the Believer's Eyes, than so many Cyphers without the initial Figure. But this is no less the Object of God's Care, than it is the cheif Concern of every faithful Christian. The Promise thus comprehensively engages in your behalf *He shall preserve thy Soul.* Preserve it from the Power of this present evil World, and all the various Enemies in league against it. Nay, the eternal God shall not only at Present be thy Guardian, and Defender, and then at last let you become a Prey to the Destroyers. No, so long as your Eyes are looking to him for
Help,

Help, and all your Expectations are built upon his promised Grace and Mercy, *The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this Time forth and forevermore.* The inestimable Promise is made to you, *None shall pluck them out of my Hands.* Whatever Changes in this mortal ever-varying Scene of Things awaits you, whatever Conflicts you must go through, either with your own corrupted Heart; with an opposing, persecuting World, or from the malicious Tempter, *in all Things you shall be more than Conqueror, through him that hath loved you.* You shall be brought through Fire and Water, into that everlasting Kingdom, prepared for the Faithful: Where, in the Presence of your great Leader and Commander, you shall adore him for keeping you in all your Ways; for being always mindful of his Covenant, and with the victorious Armies of Heaven, triumph for evermore.

From this Psalm, thus briefly paraphrased, much of Consolation, and much for Instruction in Righteousness may be clearly inferred.

I. It affords much Consolation to you, who are fearful of Heart, through a Con-

sciousness of your own Weakness, as well as the Number and Strength of your Enemies. Happy for you, that Presumption is taken out of the Way, so that you perceive, you have no Power in yourself, in which you may safely confide. Happy for you, that you are become sensible the Christian Life is a most real and continual Warfare. That you are indeed Apprehensive, of the great Danger of being vanquished, in the Combat with those Powers of Darkness and of Sin, which have already slain their Millions. This is Cause sufficient to keep you ever vigilant, ever active, ever dependent. To demonstrate to you the Necessity of being armed with the whole Armour of God, and of imploring day by day his saving Power and Grace. It is a good Thing also, to be so vehemently desirous of escaping the Wrath to come, and attaining to an eternal Life of Wisdom, Purity and Love, as shall give Steadfastness and Resolution to your Soul, and at the same Time a wholesome Dread of the Attempts of its Enemies.

But whilst O thou humble Christian, you see your Path so beset with Dangers, least Satan through your Unbelief, increase
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this Dread till it becomes servile and tormenting, remember you are not alone. Whilst with Faith you are calling for Help from the everlasting Hills, through the Mediator's Undertakings and Merits, you are as safe as if you was already entered into the Rest prepared for the People of God. You have the same all-sufficient Security, that you shall come from the Combat crowned with Honour and Victory, as they in Heaven have, that their Happiness shall know no End. Both are secure, only through the Promise and Faithfulness of God. The Saints in Heaven triumph, because of this good Word of the Lord, in which they trust with their whole Heart; *I give unto them eternal Life.* And every Saint on Earth may rejoice, because, *He that keepeth Israel, hath said, I will preserve thy going out, and thy coming in, from this time forth for evermore.*

True it is, that when Pride and Self-sufficiency, separate between you and your Strong-hold, so that your Soul, as the Psalmist expresses it, *No longer hangeth upon God*, then you may fall and perish for ever. Because the Promises of God belong to those, and only those, who seek

his Strength and his Face evermore. But whilst you are looking to God for Help, be strong, and assure your Heart of Victory. Behold! what comfortable Words, the everlasting God, makes use of, on Purpose to disperse all your discouraging Fears. *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the Right-hand of my Righteousness.* Behold! all incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: *They shall be as nothing, and they that strive with thee shall perish. They that war against thee, shall be as nothing, and as a Thing of Nought.* For *I the Lord thy God will hold thy Right-hand, saying unto thee, fear not, I will help thee.* Isa. xl. 10. 13. Wherefore then art thou so disquieted and dejected, whilst your Conscience, beareth this Testimony, that you live in constant Dependance upon the God of Heaven; whilst you know yourself to be amongst those, whose Eyes look unto the Hills, and whose Help cometh from the Lord. Rejoice thou in the Lord, and glory thou in the Holy One of Israel. Pray that your Eyes may be opened, as the Servant of
Elisba,

Elisha, was enlightened. And then instead of crying out in Despondency: *Alas! how shall you do?* You will behold yourself placed on a Mountain, safe as the Prophet when surrounded with Horses and Chariots of Fire. You will answer your doubting Heart, *Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be against us.* 2 Kings vi. 17. You will hold fast the Confidence of your Rejoicing to the End, persuaded that whilst you cease not to call upon the Lord he changeth not, he will be your everlasting Defence. *So that neither Life, nor Death, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor Things present, nor Things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature, shall be able to seperate you from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Rom. viii. 38. 39.

II. It is most evident from hence, for the Instruction of the Unconverted, that whilst they forget and despise God, they remain not only under the dreadful Dominion of Sin, but under the grossest Infatuation of Folly. If you are one of that unhappy Number, you do not distinguish, what is excellent and desirable in the highest
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Degree, from what is most to be detested and dreaded. You would yourself judge a Man worthy the Name and Treatment of a Fool, an Ideot, who did not prefer Safety to extreme Danger: Comfort and Assurance to unpardoned Guilt and Destruction. But yet in this Manner do you behave, O thou careless and ungodly Sinner. You perceive not the Difference between having the Lord, the Lord God Almighty, for or against you. Of being interested in his Promises, or the devoted Object of his Curses; of having him stand round about you, watching over you for good with more than parental Fondness, and training you up for the everlasting Enjoyment of Himself; or beholding you with Indignation and with Jealousy, *Preparing his Arrows, bending his Bow, and making it ready to destroy you with a swift Destruction,* as the Avenger of your Iniquity, your immortal, Almighty Enemy.

Rash, presumptuous Sinner, stop and consider, this Day, this Hour, you have God for your Adversary. Such he will continue till in the Way of humble Faith, and heartfelt constant Dependence, upon his Grace and Holy Spirit, you turn unto him and become

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an Heir of the Promise. And can you be so without all feeling, as to have any Ease or Peace, till you see yourself the Man to whom the Promises belong? When the God of Glory stoops so low, as to assure you, a Worm of the Earth, whose Righteousness cannot reach to him; a Sinner deserving Wrath even in your best Estate; to assure you, that if you will depend upon him, make your Prayer daily unto him, he will be your Shield and all-sufficient Helper; can you be so without all feeling of your own truest Interest and Happiness, as to set this invaluable Offer at nought? And in the horrid Contempt of your Heart, to prefer a vain, foolish, wicked Life, and the Gratifications of some vile Affection, to all the loving Kindness, and infinite Condescension, expressed towards you in the Promise of God? O let these invite and win you to Obedience, though you harden your Heart against the Terrors of the Lord. When divine Love addresses you, with all its charming Meekness and Gentleness, proposing immediately to take you under its shadowing Wings, to fill you with Confidence of Conquest over all that dares to oppose your Entrance into Heaven?

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When nothing on your Part is required, but Acknowledgement of your Helplessness, Guilt, and Danger, together with a Behaviour corresponding with it, in order to bring you within the Kingdom of God's dear Son, yea to make you a Son, an Heir of God? If still you will be a Rebel, or live as if you stood in no Need of God, his Son, and his Spirit; you renounce the Use of your Reason, as well as deny the Faith.

And the more inexcusable are you for remaining profane or negligent of God, because the Promise of his most tender Care, ever watchful Love, and present Protection, till you are received into Glory Everlasting, is free to every one who desires to be Partaker of it. Whatever your Manner of Life in Time past has been, this will not be pleaded against your favourable Reception into the Household of Faith and Family of God. Look now unto the Hills, to him that is gone up on High, and sat down at the right Hand of the Throne of God. Now only confess how weak and helpless you are, in Guilt and Ignorance, in Slavery to vile Lusts, and tyrannous Passions, and if you
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indeed desire the necessary Change from Death to Life should pass on you, look up. And whilst you continue in this Act of Faith, your Cure as that of the wounded Israelites will begin, be carried on, and perfected.

He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not.

There is full Encouragement to ask, even the Promise of God. Act according to its most comfortable Direction, and then immediately, the Character of the Believer described in the Text becomes your own. Persevere in your Dependance and all the comprehensive Blessings promised in the Text, shall be yours. Nay supposing to this Hour, God has been angry with you for your Wickedness, and just about to pluck thee out of thy Dwelling, and root thee out of the Land of the Living. Yet if you look now to his Throne as a repenting Supplicant, if you implore his Mercy and Help in the Name and for the Sake of Jesus, instead of a Curse, you shall inherit his Favour, and be admitted to partake plentifully of every Gift, necessary to spiritual Life and Godliness.

III. Learn from this Scripture, how groundless and blasphemous the common Objection against a Godly and Christian Life,

Life is. Melancholy and uncomfortable, say the World, it is to live in such strict Obedience to God's Word, it makes even young People so very thoughtful, we cannot away with it.

Melancholy and uncomfortable say you! What? to depend upon God from Day to Day, for Help, for Peace, for every Blessing, and to find that such Dependence is crowned with all Success? Or is it melancholy and uncomfortable to have the Heart glowing with Warmth of Gratitude to God, for such exceeding great and precious Promises? To see these Promises as Walls of Salvation on every Side, against the Destroyer of Souls, the corrupted World, and a Man's own evil Heart?

I allow every real Christian, whether young or old, must *be very thoughtful*. But is Thought a Burthen or grievous in any Degree? to none but Fools and Sinners. It is the Subject on which the Mind employs itself, which makes Thought delightful or otherwise. Sure then to be able to meditate on the eternal God, as your God, and your Guide even unto Death; to dwell on the joyous Consideration, that he is all to you, that you can want, and bound

bound even by his own most gracious Oath and Promise, to bring every humble Dependant upon his Arm, and his Grace to Heaven: Say, what Pleasures can Dissipation, or Mirth afford equal to such Thoughtfulness? Thoughtfulness, which the more close and abiding it is, the more satisfying it proves to the Soul. So that when you see the Excellent of the Earth, fond of Privacy and Retirement, after the Business of their Employment is over; flying from Noise and Numbers; from foolish Amusements, and fashionable Pastimes: When you observe their Seriousness so great, *that they scarce Smile a little*, think not, (for that is the Foolishness of Folly) think not they want Chearfulness and Joy. No, they have much more of both, than those who wear ever the broad Face of Mirth, and profess to withhold their Hearts from no carnal Indulgence. A real Christian is satisfied from what he has in Possession, even Grace, Mercy, and Peace from GOD, the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, and from the infinite Riches he has in Reverſion. The Gospel is proposed to you under the Image of a *Feast of fat Things, of Wines, of Wines*
well

well refined upon the Lees. Hearken diligently unto me, saith God, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight itself in Fatness. Isaiah lv. 2. Such is the Excellency of my Doctrines, the Multitude of rich Promises, the Greatness of the present and future Felicity they lead to and insure, that no bestial Epicure finds such Matter of rejoicing, when gratifying his pampered Appetite, at the Table of Luxury, as every Believer who is intitled to and persuaded of the Reality of God's Promises.

Lastly, We are taught by this Scripture, in what Method we may most successfully encounter with our Enemies, and stand unmoved by all their Assaults. It is a Method, which the World in Wisdom never could attain. In Books and Writings which are the product of the Human Understanding, unenlightened by the Word and Grace of God, you will find yourselves exhorted to resolve, and in your own Strength to do such and such Duties, and practice such and such Virtues, or by the Representation of the Advantages of virtuous Conduct in this Life, and the ill Consequences of Vice, to prepare yourselves against the Attacks of

of the one; and for the Performance of the other.

But blessed be GOD, far more mighty are the Weapons of our Christian Warfare, even the Study of the PROMISES of GOD, and the pleading these Promises, in humble Prayer to GOD, as the Word of Righteousness, his own Word, wherein he has caused us to put our Trust.

The Promises of GOD are the very Life and Support of all practical scriptural Religion. And for this Cause, when St. Paul exhorts to that high Degree of Sanctification, *even to the cleansing ourselves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to the perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* 2 Cor. vii. 1. He lays the Promises of GOD, as the Foundation on which alone such a spiritual Practice, and Christian Conversation, could possibly be built. *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean Thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* This Promise of fatherly Love and Protection, including the Gift of all Things needful or profitable for the Soul; is an Encouragement every Way equal to the

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most difficult Undertakings: And by engaging the Power of God, to assist and succeed your own natural Weakness, it gives the most animating Assurance, that you shall be enabled to do and suffer every Thing required of you. And in order that your Faith and Hope, might be in God, without wavering; it is not possible for you to be placed in any Circumstances of Distress, either of Body or of Mind, in which you will not find if you understand the Scriptures, Promises adapted to your particular Case, and made as it were on Purpose for you. Thus if Guilt of Conscience disturbs and affrights you, so that you desire nothing so much as Reconciliation with God. What can give you Quietness and Assurance, if this Promise doth not. *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Isaiah lv. 7. If you say, I would return, but my Wickedness is so enormous; it is attended with such inflaming Circumstances, that I can have no Hope. Behold! how God, in tender Mercy hath taken away this Objection? Ad-

Addressing himself to you, as one fully acquainted with the Workings of your afflicted and wounded Spirit. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as White as Snow, though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the Good of the Land.*

Do grievous Back-slidings after your Knowledge of the Way of Salvation, terrify you, so that you almost give up all Hope of Forgiveness, can any Thing revive and give you such strong Consolation, as this Promise? *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* 1 John ii. 1, 2.

Or are you troubled under a Sense of your sad Declensions? It is written for your Sake, *They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their Strength, they shall mount up with Wings as Eagles.* Isaiah xl. 31. If a Sense of your own Inability and moral Impotence oppresses you, you are abundantly encouraged by this Promise. *He giveth Power to the Faint, and to them that have no Might, he increaseth Strength.* Isaiah xl. 29. Or if you fear your Adversaries,

least you should fall; and perish in their Hands. What could be said more effectual to dispel all Heaviness and Dejection: Whilst you are humble and dependant upon God, and his Grace; what could be said more than that God will preserve your Soul, from this Time forth, even for evermore.

But in order to receive Strength and Advantage from these Promises, you must place your Dependance upon them; you must make mention of them continually in Prayer, as the Ground of your Hope, and all your Encouragement. When you feel Want of Peace or Light, of Faith or Love, you must acquaint yourself with the Promises of God, by which he has engaged to give you a suitable Supply. By this Means Prayer will be an Exercise delightful to your own Soul, and acceptable before God, *for you will ask in Faith nothing doubting. You will be able to believe, you have the Things you ask for, as the Lord requires you to do, and you shall have them.* In every Hour of Temptation, and in the Midst of the Battle, this Confidence will save you from Flight, and from Fear. *The Lord by his Promise, is on my Side, he will not suffer my Foot to be moved.*

S E R M O N X I.

Personal Obedience and imputed
Righteousness not to be seperated.

MATTHEW xix. 6.

*What therefore God hath joined together, let
not Man put asunder.*

N O one need be told I apprehend, with
what View these Words were at
first spoken. That they were designed to
re-establish the honourable State of Mar-
riage, on its original Plan, and to prevent
much domestick Confusion and Misery,
which must follow from a licentious Use
of Divorce, such as Lust or Ill-Humour,
would prompt to.

But I shall beg Leave to make use of this
Injunction in another Light, and to dis-

course upon it, as a most solemn Admonition to beware of separating Things far more essentially united then the married Pair, and which cannot be put asunder without Destruction to the immortal Soul. I mean Personal Obedience, from Justification and Salvation by the imputed Righteousness of Christ. Or in an opposite but equally dangerous Error, putting asunder the imputed Righteousness of Christ, for the most dutiful Subjection to his Commandments.

And in order to make this Discourse, through the divine Blessing more useful, I shall treat my Subject in the following Manner.

I. Prove whence it comes, that Man is so dreadfully apt to put these Things, which God hath joined together, asunder.

II. The mischeivous and deplorable Effects of so doing.

III. Point out the Means necessary to preserve Men from falling into an Error, so general, that very few escape it.

I. The first Reason why Man is so dreadfully apt to put these Things asunder, which

which God hath joined together, may be the Narrowness of his Mind, which without Care and Circumspection, is easily so much engrossed by any one Object, to which it attends, as to lose Sight of others. It is the Property of Man, when he has once adopted an Opinion from the Persuasion of its Truth, immediately to lay an unwarrantable Stress on it; and to magnify its Importance, with infinite Jealousy against every Thing which but seems to oppose it. This unhappy Constitution of the fallen Soul, continually discovers itself, in Points respecting common Life, as well as in Points of much greater Moment. It infuses much of the Bitterness of party Spirit; and is the Parent of all that detestable Bigotry, with which Religious Sects have most devoutly hated and persecuted each other.

Again, A clear Discernment of some dangerous Error, which alarms the Mind, makes it apt to suppose, that absolute Safety dwells at the greatest possible Distance from it. In Consequence of which a Man retreats, and retreats without any Suspicion, till he is over-taken and ensnared by some Error, equally pernicious, though diame-

trically opposite. In this Way it is, that those who desire to excel in Gentleness and Good-nature, become oftentimes criminally complaisant; violate Duty, and dishonour God, sooner than disoblige a Fellow-Creature. In this Way the Excellency of Courage is lost in Fool-hardiness and Presumption, Prudence and Caution, degenerate into abject Selfishness, and the Wisdom of Frugality, into Covetousness, which God abhorreth.

It is no Wonder therefore, if the Littleness and Weakness natural to the Mind of fallen Man, should produce the same Effect, when Religious Truth is its Object and Pursuit, as it does in all other Cases. Certainly it must be most visible with Regard to the Extremes I am now cautioning against, since besides the Littleness and Weakness of the Human Mind, there is in it so much of Pride and the Love of Sin, to tempt and excite Men to put asunder personal Obedience, and imputed Righteousness.

To be the Architect of your own Happiness; under the strongest Feelings of Self-preference, to recount your own Virtues; to calculate the Difference between
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yourself and others, and to fancy there is more to commend in you, for Duties performed, than to blame for Failures and Offences; and to expect Heaven not *altogether* as a Gift, an Alms, but in Acknowledgement for Service and Duty. This Plan is extremely soothing to Self-love. This Scheme of Religion highly gratifies, by keeping out of Sight the Poverty of Human Nature, the Purity and Extent of God's Law, and all those self-abasing Truths, which Christ reveals, and which seeking Life through him only, continually inculcates.

On the other Hand, to extol without ceasing, the All-sufficiency of the Obedience, Life, and Righteousness of Christ; to suppose all Things pertaining to, and requisite for the Sinner's Salvation, were so wrought out and finished by the Redeemer, that nothing is required from the Sinner, but to acknowledge the unspeakable Benefit; and to honour it by imagining that Repentance, Obedience, and Works of Righteousness, cannot make your State with Respect to God more safe, or the Want of them, less so.

This is a Way of thinking, favourable and indulgent in the last Degree to Sin.

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A masterly Invention to pacify the guilty Conscience, whilst it spares, shelters, encourages the Lusts of the Flesh. A Scheme made on Purpose for those who have been enlighten'd; who have begun in the Spirit and run well; but longing after unhallowed Ease, forbidden Gain, or carnal Pleasure; as the Israelites did after the Onions, the Fish, and the Melons, in Egypt, have turned back to their own Way.

Wherever therefore, either Pride reigns in the Heart, or the Love of Sin, Men will put asunder personal Obedience, and the imputed Righteousness of Christ.

And this fatal Division the Devil will use all his Influence to procure and promote, For though all his Innocence and Glory are utterly lost, he still retains his Knowledge. He knows you must become his Prey, if by any Means you are prevailed over to separate what God hath joined together.

Are you endeavouring therefore, to obtain Life, by your own Works, the Enemy of your Soul, will cast the most beautiful Colours on your Conduct; be at much Pains himself to gild and emblazon every one of your Virtues, and hold them up before

your eyes, and your own

your Eyes, to produce in you self-admiring Thoughts.

He will do so, that your Practice of Virtue, and Zeal for Obedience, may be without any Knowledge of yourself, as a defiled, sinful Creature, without any Humbleness of Mind: That you may be ever ignorant of God's Righteousness, and by endeavouring to establish your own, may never submit yourself to the Righteousness of God.

On the contrary, if you now begin to depend on Christ, as your Hope and Peace, your Surety and Righteousness, immediately the Deceiver changes his Method of Assault: He will join with you in beating down all Merit in Man, whisper himself perverted Truth into your Ears, as he cited Scripture of Old. He will help you to vilify all the Righteousnesses of Men, as filthy Rags, and mightily endeavour to push you on to that dreadful Error, of fancying Christ is most exalted, when personal Obedience is least regarded: *When no Stress in any View is laid upon it.* That by this Device you may become infatuated enough to build your House, all your eternal Hopes, upon the sandy Foundation, of a dead notional Faith,

Faith, sure at last to fall upon you, and grind you to Powder.

That you may be guarded therefore, in this important Matter, against the Infirmary of your Nature, or the Temptations of Satan, I proceed to lay before you,

II. The mischievous Effects of separating personal Obedience, and imputed Righteousness from each other.

If you place your Dependance for Salvation upon the former, lightly esteeming the latter, then the better you suppose you are, the more self-sufficient you will be. For whatever in your own estimate is of Virtue enough, to procure your Acceptance with God, and entitle to eternal Happiness, will of Course appear in your Eyes an Acquisition to value yourself upon. The very same unhappy Propensity in the human Heart, which tempts the wise Man to glory in his Wisdom, the mighty Man in his Might, and the rich Man in his Riches, will far more strongly prompt you whilst depending on the Worthiness of your personal Obedience, to glory in your own Righteousness: Inasmuch as every Degree of moral Excellence surpasses the Worth of Riches, or intellectual Endowments.

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And though you acknowledge your Obedience is performed, through the Aids of Grace, this will not prevent you any more than it did the Pharisee, *from trusting in yourself as righteous and despising others.* And therefore though your good Qualities make you highly esteemed amongst Men, GOD knoweth your Heart, and in utter Abhorrence of the Self-conceit which rules in it, hath declared, *He that exalteth himself shall be abased.*

Further, by placing your Dependance on your own personal Obedience, and lightly esteeming imputed Righteousness, you contradict and oppose the most solemn Declarations of GOD, concerning the Way of Salvation. *We have turned, saith the Scripture, every one to his own Way, and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all.* He (*i. e.* Christ) was made Sin for us, *who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him. That we might be accepted in the beloved.* And to prove the absolute Necessity of receiving Salvation in and through Jesus Christ, as the Purchase of his Blood, and the free Gift of his Grace, I have sworn, saith he, *by myself the Word is gone out of my Mouth in Righteousness, unto me*

me every Knee shall bow, every Tongue shall swear. Is. xlv. 26.

To suppose therefore you can be made righteous, be accepted and saved, in Consideration of your own personal Obedience, and not by the imputed Righteousness of Christ, is to be found fighting against these Truths of God; and affirming what he absolutely denies, *that any Man living can be justified, when he enters into Judgment with him.* The Consequence of such a Denial of the Truth, in the End, is eternal Death; *for so many as are of the Works of the Law, are under the Curse.* So many as expect Pardon, and Justification, by and on Account of what they can do in Conformity to the Law, so far from being blessed in their Endeavours, are bound over to suffer this dreadful Penalty. And that *no Man is justified by the Law, in the Sight of God, it is evident, for the Just shall live by Faith.* Gal. iii. 10. 15.

From hence you see, that though it gives little or no Offence to your Fellow-Creatures, to slight, and disparage the Righteousness of our God and Saviour, and to depend entirely upon your own Arm to secure you. Though in general, it may be deemed suf-

sufficient, that you are sober, just, and outwardly religious, yet in Fact, you are governed by a proud Spirit; you maintain a Scheme of Religion which utterly contradicts the Revelation of GOD's Will in his Word; and you stand expressly excluded from Pardon and Justification, because you put asunder what GOD hath joined together; personal Obedience from the imputed Righteousness of Christ.

On the other Hand, still more dreadful are the Effects of placing your Dependence for Salvation on the imputed Righteousness of Christ, to the Neglect or Disparagement of personal Obedience. No sooner can you be entangled in this most horrible Error, than you will entertain slight Thoughts of Sin, defiling, accursed, damnable, as it is. You will be careless and negligent. You will account it a Part of legal Bondage, instead of your bounden Duty, to read the Scriptures; to watch, to pray, to examine yourself; and by a constant Mortification of your evil Desires, to study to shew how deeply sensible you remain of what Christ has done to wash you from your Sins, and what awful Thoughts you have of his Authority and Government, over you. All
your

your Religion will be a Renunciation of Self-righteousness: A most bold, insolent Reliance on the Son of God, without Repentance, without Love, as if he was a Friend of Sinners, though they continued in the Practice of Iniquity; or would see nothing worthy of Death or Hell, in those who claimed him as their Righteousness and Surety, though they should do even what they lusted.

From such diabolical Opinions, the Growth of every evil Temper, and the Return of old Sins in all their Strength, will of Course follow. For as the Use of the Means of Grace, and a constant lively Sense of the Evil, and Danger of Sin, are the appointed Bulwarks against assaulting Temptations, no sooner are these laid low, or neglected to be kept in constant repair, than every Enemy will enter.

And when instead of being covered with honest Shame, and filled with Godly Sorrow, for being overcome, and yielding to evil in any Degree; such Sensations are judged needless: Envy and Pride, and every vile Affection, will gain more and more Ground. Till at length, Christ the Bruiser of the Serpent's Head, Christ the holy One of God, raised from

from the Grave that he might bless every one of us, by turning us from our Iniquities, will be made no other Use of, than to reconcile Sin and Salvation; then to say as Satan did in Paradise to transgressing Eve, *Thou shalt not die, though thou rebel against God; though found an evil Doer unto the last, Sin shall not be thy Destruction.* And Satan having thus prevailed, will say, *Ab! Ab! there, there, so would I have it:*

Again. Such a wild Construction of the Redeemer's Merits, and the Efficacy of his glorious Righteousness, offers to him the greatest Injury; and does him in the Eyes of the World, infinite Dishonour. It offers the greatest Injury to him, because such a monstrous Perversion of his Atonement, is a Denial of many of his own most solemn Declarations. It treats him with utter Contempt, as not worthy of Credit and Regard in the Whole of his Teachings, but only in some Particulars. It gives him the Lie, because he declares of himself, that he *came not to destroy the Law.* And in Confirmation of this, after fully vindicating the spiritual Signification of the Law, and the Extent of its Obligations, from all the Corruptions of Men in the longest Discourse, he hath

left us. After this, he concludes, with assuring us that he, and he only, is wise unto Salvation, *who heareth these Sayings of his, and DOETH them.*

You injure him therefore in the highest Degree, by such a Reliance on him as the Lord your Righteousness, as justifies you to to your own Mind, in the least Neglect, or in slight Thoughts of personal Obedience and Holiness.

By the same Perversion of his sacred Truth, you bring Scandal upon the Redeemer in the Eyes of the World, as far as lies in your Power. They will judge of the Tree by its Fruits; and of the Excellency of your Principles and Doctrines, by their Influence on your Heart and Life. By necessary Consequence, when they observe you *are barren and unfruitful in the Knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, though very loud and vehement in magnifying the Glory, and All-sufficiency of his Obedience and Sacrifice. When they observe you are proud, worldly-minded, and of a bad, immoral Spirit, the Blame and Reproach will not rest upon you, as it ought. It will reach through you, to the Principles you espouse; and by Reason of your *perni-*
cious

cious Ways, the Way of Truth itself will be evil spoken of, and cast out with reviling.

I tell a Man, that the Doctrine of imputed Righteousness, eminently secures to God, the highest Veneration of his Law, impresses the Mind with the strongest Abhorrence of Sin, and furnishes it with the noblest Motives for highest Gratitude and Love. The very contrary of all this, he will believe is the direct and natural Tendency of this peculiar Doctrine of the Gospel, when his own Observation furnishes him with numerous Examples, of impious Dependance upon the Righteousness of Christ; when he has been Witness to much, very much of open Contempt of God's Law and Love of Sin, amongst those who exalt the Importance and Necessity of depending on Christ alone. And though the only just Inference, from observing such a horrid Separation of the most exact Obedience from Salvation by Grace, is, that the very best Things are subject to the worst Abuses; yet so long as Example weighs more with Men than Profession, the World will not distinguish, but suppose themselves justified in flying from the hateful Truth, which by these Instances is construed to be actually an Encou-

agement to Sin. Now, though all who despise and reject the Righteousness of Christ, as the sole meritorious Cause of the Sinner's Acceptance, we are told shall perish; yet the Offence and Scandal given them against it, by turning this Grace into Lasciviousness, will be visited upon their Heads, who gave it.

Farther, By placing your Dependance for Salvation on the Righteousness of Christ, to the Neglect and Disparagement of personal Obedience, you deny the Operations of the Holy Ghost. This blessed and divine Spirit, is given, we are expressly told, *to mortify the Deeds of the Body*; to bring forth his proper Fruit, *of all Righteousness and Goodness in those who abide under his Influence*. And Sanctification by the Spirit of God, is insisted on and expressed in God's Word continually, no less than Belief of the Truth: Insomuch, that it is said, *if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his*. And that so many as are led (*αγωμαι*, actuated) *by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God*. But these Scriptures you totally set aside, and say, there is no Need of any Holy Ghost, if personal Obedience and Sanctification can pos-

possibly be dispensed with; because the Necessity of his supernatural Influence on the Mind, is founded on the absolute Necessity of being converted from the Practice and Love of Sin to the Love of God and the Practice of Holiness. No sooner therefore, can the one be judged needless, then the other of Course becomes superfluous; and if Man unchanged, and unrenewed in the Spirit of his Mind, may see the Salvation of God, the Influences of the Holy Ghost, neither deserve to be implored, nor believed to be real. And how little short of Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost those Principles are to be esteemed, which render his sanctifying Operations unnecessary, those would do well to determine, who adopt them.

The End of so dreadful an Error and Delusion, which injures the Son of God, and brings infinite Discredit upon his Gospel, which encourages Security in Sin, and sets aside the Operations of the Holy Ghost, is Destruction. Sin unrepented of and unsubdued, brings forth Death, eternal Death; and to suppose a barren Assent of the Mind, to one Scheme of Religion, or Set of Doctrines, will prove any Security against this,

more than to another, is to suppose, God looketh not to the Heart, but to the Notions of the Mind; and that so long as Men hold some principal Truths, he will be favourable to them on that Account, though they hold them in Unrighteousness. But this is utterly unworthy of his Perfections, and incompatible with his own repeated Declarations. Unworthy of his Perfections, because these make Sin and Disobedience the Object of his Abhorrence. They excite in him an Antipathy to Sin, so that he cannot dwell with it. He can hold no friendly Intercourse with those, whose Hearts are not set against it. Nay, by his very Appointment of such a Method of taking away Sin, by the bloody Sacrifice of his own Son once on the Cross, and by the perpetual Representation of his Death in Heaven. By this Method, God hath most plainly demonstrated, that he is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. He must first therefore be divested of that glorious Holiness, which exalts him above all his Creatures, before any one that loves Sin, allows himself in any evil Way, or is indifferent whether his Corruptions are mortifying in him or no, can have Communion

munions with him. Much easier is it to suppose, an honest Man delighting himself in Intimacy with a branded Knave---A bounteous loving Christian, in Concord with an oppressing Miser, than that the Perfections of God should ever admit the least Union with a Soul, that does not abhor that which is Evil.

Neither is it any Warrant to suppose, because *God justifies the Sinner and the Ungodly*, therefore his Antipathy is the less against Sin. For who is the Sinner, and who is the ungodly Person, whom he justifies? What? one that still drinks Iniquity like Water. What? one that careth not for God. No, by no Means. He never did, he never can justify a Person of this Character. For Hatred of such a Character is essential to his consummate Perfection. The Sinner, the Ungodly whom he justifies, is one that has begun to mourn for Sin, to be burdened with it, to be painfully conscious of its defiling accursed Nature, and heartily desirous of Pardon and Power to go and sin no more. Not for Works of Righteousness, I allow, but freely through the Redemption that is in Jesus, is such a one acquitted from the Curse of the

Law. But observe, there is first a sin-hating Constitution of Soul, if I may use the Expression, created in him, the Effect of which is uniform increasing Holiness. And whenever this is wanting, you are not the Sinner, that God will justify, but the Sinner, whom he condemns.

But as we may often err, in drawing Inferences from the Perfections of God, from our own abstract Reasoning upon them. As our own Reasonings can never be so weighty and peremptory as the Assertions of God--from these also, it is most evident, that where Personal Obedience is neglected to the last, there can be no Salvation. To cite all the Assertions which are clear and positive to this Point would be endless. Let three of them suffice,

The first is that remarkable one, where the Redeemer, cuts off all vain Dependence upon his Righteousness, without Conformity to his Example and Commands, by declaring, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord! Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* Mat. vii. 21. The same unchangeable Truth

is

is, affirmed by him with a double Affe-
ration, John iii. 3. *Verily, verily, I say un-
to thee, except a Man be born again, he can-
not see the Kingdom of God.* And in that
well known Passage, Heb. xii. 16. it is de-
clared, *without Holiness no Man shall see
the Lord.*

I am now speaking not to them that
believe not the Scriptures, but to them
who do believe them. And I may venture
to affirm, there cannot be stronger Proofs
brought to enforce the Necessity of Faith
in Christ, then these are to enforce the
absolute Necessity of personal Obedience.
And if the Infidel and Self-righteous Mo-
ralist, however confident, stand excluded
the Favour of God, and the Happiness of
Heaven, because it is written, *He that be-
lieveth not the Son, shall not see Life.* E-
very Worker of Iniquity, every wilful Of-
fender, who has a Name in the Church
of Christ, stands as much excluded by the
Scriptures above-mentioned. It remains
therefore, that if you love your own
Salvation, you must, above all Things
avoid each of these Rocks, so fatal to Souls
in this dangerous Gulf, we are passing
through.

To

To assist you in this important Business, I proceed,

III. To point out some of those Means which are evidently necessary for your Direction and Safety.

I. Be diligent in reading your Bible. *Ye do err not knowing the Scripture*, is applicable to all, who are under the Power of Delusion, and embrace a Lie for the Truth. But if through much Indifference to the Welfare of your Soul, or any bigotted Attachment to your own Way of thinking, you do not carefully compare the Doctrine you receive with the Scripture, it is a just Thing in God, to let you wander out of the Way. And since you can be content to hold any Opinion, without the clear and full Sanction of his Word, to leave you to the miserable and unavoidable Effects of such a Choice.

From Ignorance of Scriptures each of these Errors spring, and cannot consist with the Knowledge of it. For, if you are now amongst the many, who consider the Son of God in no other View than that of almost perfect Teacher of Morals, and a Law-giver to whom Obedience is due. If in Consequence of such Principles, you lay the whole Stress of Man's Salvation upon the Performance of certain Duties: Think and

speak

Speak as if there was Remission of Sins without shedding of Blood, and Man could be saved by his own Works of Righteousness. This dangerous Error, will be detected and renounced by you, when you understand the Oracles of God. Immediately you will hear them calling upon you to adore the Lord Jesus Christ, as more than an unerring Prophet, revealing the Will of the Father, more than a King, reigning in Righteousness over his Church. You will understand how infinitely beholden to him, you are, for more than Instruction and Knowledge. That he is the Lamb of God that taketh away your Sin, that he is your Passover sacrificed for you, whose Blood still speaketh better Things than the Blood of Abel, and saith in your Behalf to the Enemy and Avenger, Touch not my redeemed One, and do that Soul, the Purchase of my own Blood, no harm. You will find that he was sent into the World to be a Propitiation for Sin, and that the Lord did lay on him the Iniquity of us all,

Such Declarations without any Comment of Men's devising, will make you perceive, how dangerously you erred, whilst by depending on your personal Obedience, you lightly esteemed the Rock of our Salvation.

vation. They will convince you, that the whole Scheme of your Religion, your Way of Approach to God, and all your Expectations of Happiness were built on a Foundation, unscriptural, false, and of Course leading to Destruction.

If on the other Hand, you are most unhappily involved in the opposite Delusion: If you are exalting a false, imaginary Christ, laying no Stress on the Practice of moral Duties; if through a well-meant, but blind Zeal to give all the Glory, (where in the highest Degree it is certainly due) to him that hath so LOVED us, as gladly to make himself *a Curse for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.* By diligent Reading the Scriptures with a praying Mind, you will be saved even from this Error. You will find, not Man, but that Redeemer whom you say, you delight above all Things to honour; you will find, that very Redeemer requiring Obedience, as much as Faith. The one, as the sincere, unsuspected Proof that the other is real and alive. You will find him sending forth his chosen Apostles, not only to preach that *unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given,* but to teach his Church

Church to observe all Things whatsoever *he hath commanded*. Mat. xxviii. 20. You will find him absolutely cutting off all Pretences to fancy you love or honour him, unless you abide in the most dutiful Subjection to his Authority, by saying, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*. John xiv. 21. *Ye are my Friends, if ye do, whatsoever I command you*. John xv. 14.

Farther, By studying your Bible, you will observe what an admirable Way, the blessed God hath taken to secure this necessary Union, between Salvation through the imputed Righteousness of Christ, and personal Obedience, which we are all so bent to put asunder. The very Scriptures which mention the one, include the other also. For Instance: It is written, 2. Cor. v. 14. 15. *The Love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, than were all dead*.

But least any should imagine the Death of the Son of God, would save him from Punishment, though lawless and disobedient, it is immediately added, *And that he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him,*

him, that died for them and rose again. Here you see the utmost Devotedness of Heart, and the most absolute surrender of yourself to the Will and Service of Christ, is the very End proposed by his Death.

With the same View another Scripture saith, *Ye are bought with a Price.* There is the Truth and Reality of our Redemption indisputably asserted. In the Words immediately following, the Necessity of the highest Degrees of personal Holiness. *Therefore glorify God both with your Bodies and with your Spirits which are his.* The last Scripture I will refer you to, is written. 1 Pet. ii. 24. *Who his ownself, bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, should live unto Righteousness.*

The other admirable Way which the blessed God uses in his Scripture to preserve you from putting asunder personal Obedience and Dependance on the Saviour's Righteousness, is by speaking of each of them, in the highest Terms. In numberless Places of Scripture, the Promise of eternal Life, is made to Faith only. *He that believeth shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned.*

In these Texts, there is not the least mention of personal Obedience. To convince you, I apprehend, that making your Supplication before the Son of God for Pardon and Life, is the only Way to obtain it; and to alarm you, if you never have done so, by bringing you under a terrible Sentence of Condemnation. And to humble you always, in your Opinion of yourself, as a Sinner, who must be saved by Grace through Faith, and not by your own Works. And before this Set of Texts, you cannot examine your Heart, and be either in Peace, or Safety, if you have any Dependence but upon the Lord Jesus Christ. For though you were abundant, in Watchings, in Fastings, in Prayers, and Alms; still all these together would not make up for Want of Faith, or secure your Soul from Death.

Again, In another Set of Texts, as numerous as the former, personal Obedience is represented as the sure Way to God's Holy Hill, and to his dwelling Place, without mentioning a Syllable of Christ, his Atonement, Grace, or Power. And the Want of such Obedience is deemed a Mark and Evidence, that you are a
Son

Son of Perdition: This is done with Design, to keep you from Sinning, that Grace may abound. That your Conscience may be tormented with a wholesome Sense of your Danger of the Wrath of God, however you may in Words magnify Christ, whilst you offend and work Iniquity.

Thus by acquainting yourself intimately with the Word of God, you will be suitably impressed with the Importance of Faith, and of Obedience. You will be endued with a right Judgment, to give all the Glory and Honour of the Sinner's Salvation to him, who obeyed the Law, and suffered on the Cross for you; and yet strongly maintain the absolute Necessity of living in the constant Performance of every moral Duty, and in the Exercise of every heavenly Temper.

2. Take heed how you hear. Prove whatever is delivered from the Pulpit by the Word of God. Let it have no Weight with you; but just as far as you see it corresponds with Scripture; and is confirmed by it. Remember God has complained; *thy Teachers have transgressed against me, and caused my People to err.* If you discover therefore, that you are led to place
your

your Dependance for Salvation on your own Virtues ; taught to conclude, you can perform your Duty without Strength continually received from Christ, or that your Virtues can be accepted, without his Intercession. If whilst you are told much of the Necessity of leading a good Life, your Redemption by Jesus Christ, and the Power of his Spirit, make up little or no Part of the Discourse : You are bound, as you reverence the Scripture, to reject the Doctrine, as tending to supersede the Gospel, and make Christ of none Effect.

Or if still more dreadfully opposite to the Truth of Scripture, you are taught to fancy you are in Christ, if you do but renounce all Notions of Man's Merit and Power. And that Salvation was so wrought out by him, that nothing is needful on your Part, but to believe you shall receive the Benefit. If you are led to conceive, that the Righteousness of Christ is a Cloak for Sin, or for Sloth. In this Case, beware you are not all persuaded to credit what is said, for the Bible Religion is a practical, Holy Religion. It cannot countenance any Thing that befriends Sin.

Happy for you, if you can be taught by those who speak as the Oracles of God. If you can hear those, who one Time exhort you to *Glory only in the Cross of Christ*. Who at another, lay this as the Foundation, to beseech you, *that you present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service*. Happy for you, if you can hear those able Ministers of the New Testament, who abundantly prove that *Christ is made of God unto us, Wisdom and Righteousness, and Sanctification and Redemption*. 1 Cor. i. 30. And from thence, with all possible Advantage, urge you to *forget the Things that are behind, and to reach forth to the Things that are before, pressing toward the Mark for the Prize of the High-calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Phil. iii. 13, 14. Happy for you, if you can hear those, who cry, behold! the Glory of Jesus, the Glory, as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth, who preach *Christ as All, and in All*, and from thence prove how easy it is for the very God of Peace, to sanctify you wholly, and to preserve you blameless in Spirit, Soul and Body.

By

By hearing such sound Doctrine, which no one can gain-say, without condemning Prophets, Apostles, and the Son of God: You will be much confirmed and built up in your Holy Faith. Provided you are careful,

3. To pray that you may be preserved from putting asunder personal Obedience, and imputed Righteousness. You have been reminded in the Beginning of this Discourse, of the strong Propensity there is in Man, to sin against God and his own Soul in this Respect. If you look back into the History of the Church of Christ, you will see, that even whilst Apostles were its Ministers, and infallible Teachers watching over it, many were *wicked and unreasonable, having no Faith*. Many put away a good Conscience, and then concerning Faith made Shipwreck. If you look round you at this Time, you see, the larger Division of Mankind, confident in the Sufficiency of their own Virtues and Duties, and void of Dependence on Christ for Wisdom, Strength, and Righteousness. Whilst others are turning the Grace of our God into Lasci-

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viousness,

viouſneſs, and foaming out their own Shame, by making the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, the Encouragement of Preſumption. Now, to join with one or other of theſe Parties, the Corruptions of your own Heart ſtrongly lead. You need therefore to pray, that GOD would give you Wiſdom, and an Underſtanding to know him that is true. That amidſt the Errors of the Proud, and Unconverted; amidſt the wild Opinions of thoſe who are driven to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine, the Spirit of Truth may be with you; may ſtrengthen, ſtabliſh, and ſettle you.

In the Uſe of theſe Means, the Grace of GOD will be afforded you, and you will be kept in the ſtrait and narrow Path that *only* leadeth unto Life. No Part of the Word of GOD will condemn or diſtreſs your Soul. No Temptation will you be under, of wreſting it, to countenance your Principles, or your Practice. When you hear, the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord's laſt Diſcourſes to his Apoſtles, and all that enforces and requires perſonal Obedience, this will be
your

your rejoicing even the Testimony of your Conscience, that with Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, but according to the Will of God, you have had your Conversation in the World. Or when you read of a Generation that are pure in their own Eyes, and yet are not washed from their Filthiness; of others that had a Zeal for God, and yet were in so dangerous a State, that the Apostle had great Heaviness, and continual Sorrow of Heart on their Account, ever making Prayer that they might be saved. You can say, you have received the Lord Jesus Christ, he is your Hope, and Peace, your Life, and Strength, and Righteousness.

Thus will you walk on in the Highway of Holiness, supported by continual Supplies, from the Son of God. And when your imprisoned Soul, let loose by the friendly Hand of Death, shall wing its Way to the heavenly Jerusalem. You will find yourself of one Mind, and of one Judgment with the vast immortal Assembly; filled with a perfect Hatred to Sin, yet free from the Stain of every self-

exalting and self-righteous Thought, Advanced to angelic Excellence and Purity, yet giving Glory with a loud Voice, only to redeeming Love. Crying, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for he hath redeemed us to God by his Blood.*



S E R-

S E R M O N XII.

Christian Happiness.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

*The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the
Love of God, and the Communion of the
Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.*

THERE is not, we may conclude, one
Scripture in the whole Book of God,
more important than this. Since every
Congregation of Christian People through-
out the World, in all Ages, however di-
vided in their Judgments about other
Things, have universally agreed, nothing
is so much to be desired, as the Blessings
contained in this short, but comprehensive
Benediction. It is indeed full of the richest
Comfort, and the most edifying Instruction.

And as we would avoid the Charge, of concluding the public Worship of God; with the Sacrifice of Fools; of praying without Understanding, this above all Scriptures demands our most frequent Attention, and Enquiry into its full Import.

To assist you in this Enquiry, I shall,

I. Explain the Meaning of each Clause in this Apostolical Benediction.

II. Prove from it what ancient scriptural Christianity is.

III. The great Comfort, and Advantage, of every one who is a real Christian in this present Life, above all others; and draw some Conclusions from the Whole.

I. I am to explain the Meaning of each Clause in this Apostolical Benediction. Not that there is any real Obscurity or Darkness in it, to those who are Christians altogether. Such happy Persons want not to be told the Blessings they receive from each Person in the glorious Trinity. When I speak therefore of explaining the Text, it is for their Use and Benefit, who through
their

their Ignorance of the Scripture, and Estrangement from God; fancy these Words favour of Enthusiasm. Or at least know not, what Idea precisely to fix to the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, Yet a precise, determinate Meaning, certainly belongs to each Clause. Otherwise we must suppose that the Words which the Holy Ghost useth, are neither so proper nor expressive as those which a wise Man would make Choice of to paint the Ideas of his Mind: A Supposition this, confuted by being mentioned.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, precisely Means an Interest and Share in that inestimable Benefit, which he was manifest in the Flesh to purchase for his Church, *i. e.* Pardon and Deliverance from the Curse of God's Law, By one Man's *Disobedience, many saith the Scripture, were made Sinners.* And on Account of our own actual Love to Sin, and Commission of it in various Instances, there is Enmity through our wicked Works, between God and us, and therefore we are called Children of Wrath.

In Consequence of our Transgression, the Purity and Justice of God seems for
ever

ever to forbid his Reconciliation to us. For no two Contraries in Nature stand so essentially remote as a Sinner, and a sin-hating God.

By what Means then can Peace be made between them? Who shall be Mediator in this important Cause, in which the Honour of God, and the Happiness of Men, seem so incompatible? *If a Man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him; but if a Man sin against God, who shall plead for him?*

Such Power belongeth only to the Son of God. He alone is worthy. He is therefore called our PEACE. Of him God testifies by the Mouth of the Prophet Isaiah liii. 11. *By his Knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many, for he shall bear their Iniquities.* The same Declaration, worthy to be reported by an Angel, is made to Daniel, Dan. ix. 24. Where the coming of the Messiah, is said to be for this great Purpose, *to make Reconciliation for Iniquity.* The New Testament confirms the Declarations of the Old. It affirms constantly *that we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Rom. v. 1. *That God was in Christ reconciling the World unto him-*

himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them. 2 Cor. v. 19.

When we pray therefore, that the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with you, the precise Meaning is, that the dreadful Breach which Sin has opened between God and you, may be made up. That the Reconciliation which the Redeemer endured the Cross to obtain for them that should believe in his Name, may take place in your Favour, so that all your Transgressions may be forgiven, and all your Sin be covered.

This Mercy, is called the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, because nothing but his undeserved free Love, led him at first to bear our Grievs, and carry our Sorrows, *To be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquity.* No Degree of Worthiness was there in us, no Manner of Qualification on our Part, but Misery and Helplessness, which his tender Pity could not pass by.

It is by the same Grace also in him, that any of us are made really Partakers of the Benefit purchased by his Death and Sufferings. That upon a Penitential Acknowledgement of Sin and Guilt, and ear-

earnest Application by Prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are made accepted in the Beloved.

The Priviledge then which one who is Partaker of the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoys above all that are not, is the greatest it is possible to conceive. Far greater than what a King possesses above the Beggar, that sitteth on the Dunghill.

Before a Man is made Partaker of this Grace, he stands exposed to the Curse of the Law, for every wicked Word he ever spoke, for every evil Thought that was ever consented to, and harboured in his Mind, all is written and noted down in the Book of God. A certain fearful Suspicion of this Condemnation which hangeth over him, he often feels in spite of himself. This makes him fly from Solitude, and be afraid of Self-examination; least his guilty Conscience at such Seasons should tell him all, it hath Authority from the Word of God, to accuse him of.

The real Christian on the contrary, is pardoned and absolved from all his Offences, being justified freely through the Redemption that is in Jesus. No Charge of past Transgressions, can stand against him

him any more, then the Law of the Land against a Rebel, pardoned and restored by his King, to every Priviledge of an innocent Subject. The Knowledge of this unspeakable Mercy, fills the Christian's Mind with Peace towards God, and furnishes him with never ceasing Matter for blessing and praising the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom he has received the Atonement or Reconciliation, and is brought to possess the Love of God.

This is the second Blessing particularly implored in this Apostolical Prayer. But are not all Men the Objects of God's Love? Is not his Mercy over all his Works? Without Question it is. He loves those who are full of bitter Hatred against Him, his Word, and his People, or he would instantly blast them with the Breath of his hot Displeasure. He loves them who are setting at nought his Counsel, and despising the Son of his Love, otherwise all of this horrid Character would be Monuments of his fiery Indignation, immediately upon their committing such Provocations in his Sight. But then it is only a Love of Pity, a Love of Forbearance, which God has toward them, as a Father loves
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his first-born Son, feels strong Desires after his Reformation, though at present he is the Disgrace of his Name, the Burthen of his Eyes, the continual Grief of his Heart.

Other Kind of Love than this, God cannot have towards the Careless and the Unbelieving, for he is a holy and jealous God; their Ways and Doings are an Abomination to him, and a Trouble to bear. And if this Love is at length by Continuance in Sin outlived, then will such Despisers perish for ever. Then the Furiousness of God's Wrath will be poured out upon them, and he will avenge to the uttermost the Quarrel of his Covenant.

It is not therefore this Kind of Love, which we pray for in the Form of Benediction before us. It is the Love of Complacency and Delight, which Jesus himself made Supplication for, as the best Blessing his Church could receive, *that the Love, saith he, wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them.* John xvii. 26. Such a Love as always keeps the Ears of the Almighty Father open to their Prayers, and his Eyes running to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in their Behalf. 2 Chron. xvi. 9. Such a Love

ma-

manifested towards them, as is not to the World, which creates in them the Spirit of Adoption, whereby the faithful in Christ Jesus, can cry Abba Father, can say to the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth Eternity, thou art my Father, my God, and my strong Salvation. Such Love as enables the faithful to put their whole Trust and Confidence in the Mercy of God, knowing he is pacified for all their Iniquity, reconciled in Christ Jesus, and waiting to pour out his Benefits, as they are able to receive them.

In this State of Affiance and Love to God, none are able to walk, but those who are Partakers of the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore it is given as a peculiar Mark of their Character, *that they have not received the Spirit of the World*, which keeps them at a Distance from God, in servile Dread of his Anger, and afraid to confide in his Promises. *But the Spirit of Love, and of Power, and of a sound Mind.*

Both of these Blessings, Pardon and the comfortable Persuasion of the Soul, that it shares in that peculiar Love which God bears to his obedient Children, are far above what Men can attain to, without
hea-

heavenly Aid. Men may read their Bible, and the exceeding great and precious Promises made therein to them that love God. But still will never be able without some supernatural Aid, to assure themselves that God for Christ's Sake hath loved them and forgiven them their Trespases.

To produce this Persuasion, essential to the Comfort of the Soul, the Influence of the third Person in the glorious Trinity is absolutely needful, *for we read that no Man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor. xii. 3. The Words are as easily said as any other, but not with Affiance and unshaken Trust. Not with personal Application, so as to obtain the Answer of a good Conscience, through the Blood of sprinkling.

This can only be obtained by the illumination and abiding Influence of the Holy Ghost. Who is sent on Purpose *to take of the Things that are Christ's, and shew them unto us.* i. e. to assure us of the Reality and glorious Effects of his Undertakings, in the Office of our Surety and Mediator: To enable the Soul so firmly to believe in the Atonement he has once made, and the Intercession he continues to make for his Church,

Church, as to rejoice and say, *surely in the Lord have I Righteousness and Strength.*

In like Manner, though a Man may be sure he desires to love God, yet such is the Distance between himself a dying Creature, and the eternal Majesty; between himself a Transgressor, vile, and richly deserving Punishment, and the God of Purity and Glory; that we see it is the rarest Thing in the World, to find Men comfortably assured that the Love of God resteth upon them. Though we say, *God is good and gracious, and of great Mercy, to them that call upon him faithfully.* Though we say, *God is Love.* Yet when these Professions are put to the Trial, by a Season of Adversity, or extreme Danger, by tormenting Pain, or approaching Death; then it appears what little Root such Professions have in the Heart. Since very seldom do we find Men under such Circumstances in perfect Peace, having their Minds stayed upon God, as their God, as reconciled to them and delighting in them for his Son's Sake. Rather Men are in Distress on Account of their absolute Uncertainty, how the Heart of God stands disposed towards them.

And

And the Bitterness of all their Affliction is least God should be their Adversary.

The Office and Influence of the Holy Ghost, is in this important Matter, to help our Infirmities. *The Love of God*, it is written, Rom. v. 5. *Is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.* The same Apostle describing the peaceful State of Mind, peculiar to real Christians, and their Confidence in the Love of God towards them, saith, *Ye have not received the Spirit of Bondage, again, to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father.* And that they might know by whose Influence and Operations such a desirable Change was wrought in the Disposition of their Minds towards God. The Apostle adds, *The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.*

Besides, the Communion or Fellowship of the Holy Ghost is necessary, not only to enable the Faithful in Christ Jesus, to trust in him as the Saviour of the World, and to persuade them that the Holy God is favourable and gracious towards them: But to strengthen Men mightily against inward Corruptions: Against the natural Instability and Treachery of the Human Heart;

Heart; against the violent Assaults of the evil World; against the Sollicitations and Power of the Devil. The abiding Influence of the Holy Ghost is necessary also to renew, to sanctify, to form, and fashion the fallen Soul again, after the Image of God in Righteousness and true Holiness. Necessary to bring forth Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth, the noble and divine Fruit, which its agency produces; necessary to maintain and increase all excellent Tempers, which are comprehended in the Scripture Word, Holiness. For no less needful is this Holiness, to make us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance, of the Saints in Light, than the atoning Blood of Jesus, and his Death, to redeem us from the Curse of the Law. Those Persons, are branded of Old, as *filthy Dreamers*, who imagine that a mere Pardon without suitable Tempers, and Habits of Mind, will be sufficient for the Salvation of a corrupted Creature. And it is equally demonstrable from Reason, from Scripture, from Experience, that without Holiness, a Holy God, Holy Angels, and a Holy Heaven, cannot possibly be delighted in or enjoyed. As soon might Men mix with

the Beasts of the Field, in pleasurable Society, as those who are not delivered from the Love of Sin, join in the Sentiments, or in the Joys of the Spirits that are made perfect. For greater is the specific Difference, between a Soul that loaths Iniquity, and one that delights in it, than between the Man and the Brute.

But who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean? Who is able to change his Heart, which is desperately wicked? No one: It requires the Almighty Power of the Spirit of God, the Communion of the Holy Ghost, who as our Catechism teaches, sanctifies all the Elect People of God. The Consequence of being blessed with this Communion is daily to increase in Faith, Hope, and Love; to persevere in Sanctification, till by Death, what was begun on Earth is perfected in Heaven; and the Trees of Righteousness of the Lord's planting here below, are to flourish in the Courts of his House above for ever.

You see therefore on what Account, the joint Influence and Blessing of the glorious Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is necessary. To obtain the repenting Sinner's

ner's Discharge, from the Condemnation of God's broken Law; to enable him to walk comfortably with God in Peace and Holiness, that in the End he may inherit eternal Glory.

The Influence and Blessing therefore of each Person is distinctly implored, by every Congregation of Christians, to remain with them always.

From whence it is easy to understand

II. What ancient and scriptural Christianity is.

It is Communion with the Father, Son and Spirit, and through them with each other in Love. Was scriptural Christianity, what the modern Adulterators of it represent: Was it no more than a pure System of Morals: Was every one that loved Justice, Sobriety and Mercy a Christian; how much more rational, how much more agreeable to such an Earth-born System would it have been, to conclude the solemn and public Worship of God, with a Form of Prayer, conceived in some such Terms as these:

“ The great and eternal God, your
“ Maker, Preserver and Judge, give you
“ to live in Peace, Honesty and Sobriety,

“ and Good-will together. To abhor Hypocrisy, and Evil-speaking, henceforth and for evermore; and thus bring you to Glory.”

This Benediction, such Persons must allow, would be esteemed by themselves moral, practical, and perfectly suited to Reason and common Sense.

But behold! so totally opposite in his Judgment was the inspired Apostle of God, and so absolutely conformable to him, have all the Churches of Christ in every Place been to this Day; that the Minister concludes with a Prayer made on Purpose, to leave the strongest Impressions on every Mind, of Man's absolute Want of the Influence of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Not that the Practice of moral Righteousness might therefore be thought of little Importance, God forbid. No, but that the Practice of it might be established in its fullest Extent, and secured in its utmost Purity. For wherever the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost dwell, there must be Obedience without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy. If Men are made Partakers of this Communion, they must be filled with all the Fruits of Righte-

Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the Glory of God. This is most evident : And upon this Supposition, it is, that whenever Persons counterfeiting the Character of Christians, and falsely pretending to be under the Influence of such blessed Communion, do any base, dishonest Action, or are found wanting in any Christian Temper and Practice, they are immediately, and most justly too reproached with the Falshood of their Professions. Now this could not be the Case, unless it was the universal Sense of Mankind, that where such an Alliance is really established; there nothing contrary to the Will of God, will appear in the Life and Practice.

Again, From this summary Account of the very Life and Soul of ancient scriptural Christianity, you may judge, how *ignorant* they are, who suppose the Influences of the HOLY GHOST, were confined to the first Disciples of Christ. His miraculous Operations, it is allowed were so; but in them, there was nothing beneficial to the Soul. Our Lord himself has told us before it come to pass, that many in the last Day shall be rejected with eternal Infamy, and doomed

to Hell; who in his Name cast out Devils, and did mighty Works, because notwithstanding, they were Workers of Iniquity. But the Influence which every living Member of Christ, receives from the Holy Ghost, is that and that only, which illuminates with the true Knowledge and Understanding of God's Word, gives Power to live in Obedience to it, Peace and Comfort in the Way of Holiness.

And if such Influence from the Holy Ghost is not actually experienced by every Christian, as much now as in old Time; can any thing be conceived more shocking, than for the Minister constantly to conclude the Worship of God, who requireth Truth in the inward Parts, with asking a Blessing, we at the same Time suppose, has been withdrawn from the Church, so many Ages. *Withdrawn*, if as some say, we are not to expect, now to be taught, and led, influenced and comforted by the Holy Ghost. For in this leading, teaching, and comforting, and strengthening the Soul, all Fellowship with the Holy Ghost does consist, What Mockery! (if this was the Case) is the Church of England chargeable with in her Common Prayer, for imploring every Sabbath Day ten Times,
the

SERMON XII. 329

the Grace and Influence of this Holy Spirit? * *For the Promise (of the Holy Ghost) is to you and your Children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the*

Lord

* Our Liturgy is full of the peculiar Doctrines of Christ, and deeply sensible of Man's Weakness, is ever directing our Thoughts to that Help which cometh from Above, through the Spirit : She therefore at the Beginning of the Service, teaches us to pray unto God.

1. To grant us true Repentance and his Holy Spirit.
2. Before the first Collect.

Take not thy Holy Spirit from us.

3. For the King.

Replenish him with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit.

4. For the Royal Family.

Endue them with thy Holy Spirit.

5. For the Clergy and People.

Send down upon them, the healthful Spirit of thy Grace.

6. In the Litany.

O God the Holy Ghost, have Mercy upon us.

7. That we may bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit.

8. Endue us with the Grace of thy Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives, according to thy Holy Word.

9. Concluding Prayer in the first Service.

The Fellowship of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Communion Service.

10. Cleanse the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inspiration of thy Holy Spirit.

Lord our God shall call. Acts ii. 39. For all that hear the Word of this Salvation, which GOD hath sent unto us by his Son, are all chosen to be an Habitation of God through the Spirit, and that their Bodies should be Temples of the Holy Ghost.

And to be blessed, by partaking of the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of GOD, and the Communion of the Holy Ghost, is of the very Essence of the Christian Religion. This at once intirely distinguishes, and infinitely exalts it, above the Religion, which the Wisdom of Man, hath devised. This Communion with each Person in the glorious Trinity, is the beginning of all solid Peace, and the merciful End for which the Gospel was published. This brightest, best of all Blessings which can never surfeit, never cloy, is the present Portion made over by Promise, to every Believer in Christ Jesus, and as such, the Continuance of it is asked for, in the concluding Prayer of all Christian Assemblies. Therefore it follows.

III. That every real Christian must now be more happy than the Ease, the Esteem, the Riches and Pleasures of the World can make others. I say, must now in this Life
be

be much more happy. The World, horribly blasphemes the Honour of God, by supposing his Service full of ungrateful Restraints, and Denials, grievous to submit to. They will tell you, it is Time enough to think of Religion when you grow old; that it is an Employment of the Mind fit for the miserable and disappointed, the infirm and dying. But those who entertain such Thoughts as these, are ignorant as the Gentiles, which knew not God, by his infinite Condescension. They see Religion in no other View, than that of right Conduct, and the Performance of Duty against all Opposition. The gracious Communications from Father, Son, and Spirit, are far above out of their Thoughts. Now it is on Account of these, that true Christian Religion, in its present Privileges and Possessions, is unspeakably lovely and desirable. Ye young, ye gay, in all the Flower of Youth and Beauty's Pride; ye prosperous and ye noble, better Pleasures will you enjoy, and far more satisfying, from an Alliance so near, an Intercourse so constant between your immortal Spirits, and he who formed them; than it is possible by every

every Art to extract from all creature Good.

And that these are not rhetorical Words, exaggerating where there is no Reality, when searched to the Bottom, has been made evident, by many Witnesses in every Age; who like Moses, have counted the Reproach of Christ, greater Riches than all the Treasures of Ægypt. In the Church of God there still are many, who once were living to themselves, fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh and of the Mind; and proving by Experiment, the utmost the World could give them, of Delight and Joy. Many such still alive, speak to all who will receive their Testimony, How much greater Satisfaction! How much purer Joys, they feel in the Possession of all those *Spiritual Blessings*, wherewith they are now blessed in Christ Jesus, than when walking in the Ways of their Heart, and in the Sight of their Eyes.

Indeed, no one who sits down, calmly and deliberately to consider, what is the Import of the Grace of the Lord Jesus, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, but must see it is the most
flaming

flaming Blasphemy, to imagine, Beauty or Wine, or Riches or Honour, or all the Variety of Pleasure the whole World can furnish, is worthy to be compared with such blessed Communion.

In Fact, till this Blessing is possessed, the Soul must feel an aching Void. For infinite in its Desires, and immortal in its Nature, the Compass of the Earth and all that is therein, can never satisfy it: Nothing but Christ and his Grace, God and his Love, the Spirit and his Consolations.

This, and this alone will satisfy; for here is the proper adequate Supply of all its Wants. He that is Partaker of this Happiness, is able to deny all Worldly Lusts, and thirsts after no other. In Prosperity, it heightens every Comfort, and delivers him from the Abuse of his Abundance; in Sickness and Adversity it is a Source of Patience and of Peace; in Retirement it well supplies the Absence of Friends and Company. In short, this Communion is Light in Darkness, Life in Death, and God in all.

I shall conclude this Subject, with some Reflections on what has been said.

I. It is evident from hence, that you do not possess, what the Gospel of Christ promises, and teaches you to expect, who are constant in religious Duties, and yet conform to the World; enjoy with them their Amusements of Folly, and take Part in their Pleasures. Whether such fashionable Amusements and Pleasures, are absolutely sinful, is not the Question. The Point I would now prove is, that the *Relish* and *Enjoyment* of them demonstrates that you are a Stranger to higher and to nobler Pleasures.

What Harm is there in being delighted every Day for Hours together, with some painted Toy, some Baby's Play-thing? Yet it proves the Man shamefully weak and childish, who can find any Entertainment in this: It proves that he has made no Use of a reasonable Mind, and therefore like the Fool, *Who whistled as he went for Want of Thought*, is diverting himself in this low Manner.

The same Way of arguing is strictly applicable in the Case before us. You go to Church, you receive the Sacrament, you say your Prayers Morning and Evening, and then ask what Harm is there in frequent-

quenting also the Play-house, the Card-table, or making Use of every Invention in Vogue to amuse. The Answer is, these Things are as much beneath the Relish and Taste of one who is a Christian altogether, as Children's Pleasures or Plays are beneath a Man who enjoys the Powers of Reflection, and Contemplation. Do you think it possible for those *who have been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and are made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come.* (And thus the Apostle paints the Character of Christians. Heb. viii. 45.) Do you think it possible they should not as much dislike, to be diverted from all Attention to every thing relating to God, and his Grace, their own Souls and approaching Eternity, for Hours together; to be diverted, not by the Discharge of necessary Business, not for any profitable Purpose. Do you think it possible they should not as much dislike this, as Men of Sense and Reason dislike the Pastimes of Childhood? Or can you think, that it is probable that those who know and possess the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship

ship of the Holy Ghost, should ever seek the same Pleasures, and enjoy the very same Amusements with those who deny any such Spiritual Intercourse and Communication? That little affected with what makes them Heirs of God, and joint Heirs of Christ, whilst the other are Children of Darkness, and have their Portion only in this World, the Pleasures and Delights of BOTH, should still be one and the same?

If it be said, we are Men and not Angels, and that the Bow must not always be bent. It is readily allowed. But are there not Recreations quite consistent with the Christian Character? What more richly entertaining, than to change the busy Scene of Action, for Privacy and Retirement? Than the Conversation of the few Wise and Excellent of the Earth? Than visiting with that noblest of all Views, to encourage one another to walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his Kingdom Glory? And our Condition here, is so wisely appointed, that when we have discharged the Business of our Place and Station, and the various Duties we owe to our Relations, there will be no more Time hanging upon our Hands, than such Re-
cre-

But if you have a Relish and Taste for the Amusements of the World, and feel yourself gratified in the Use of them. Upon closer Trial and Examination, you will find all your religious Exercises and Duties, have done very little for you; that instead of enabling you to say, *Blessed are the People that know the joyful Sound; they shall walk in the Light of thy Countenance, their Delight shall be ever in thy Name, and in thy Righteousness shall they make their boast.* All your Joy is of another Kind, alas! and consists in diverting your Thoughts and Attention from your own Soul, from your God, and your everlasting Interest; consequently under the Profession of the Christian Faith, and in the Use of Christian Ordinances, you possess not what the Gospel of Christ promises, and teaches you to expect.

II. What a loud and affectionate Call is this Scripture to you, who have never yet repented, immediately to arise and come to your heavenly Father. You are afraid to divorce yourselves from your sinful Pleasures, from an Opinion that you can never live easy and satisfied without them. That you must be miserably pining after them,

and only over-awed from gratifying the raging Desires of your Heart. But this is all a Mistake. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to you, to call upon you who are still the Servants of Sin, to repent, not merely because if you do not, you must be cast into Hell. No, but from the Consideration of the Advantages you shall immediately receive. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, i. e. such rich, abundant Manifestations of the Grace of God, such holy Delights, and Joy, as may well be called the Kingdom of Heaven come down to Earth. This is at hand, only repent, and enter in.

Awake thou that sleepest. Come to thyself, thou, who like the poor deluded Prodigal, hast hitherto lived at such a sinful Distance from God. You are his Offspring. His House, his Heart is open, and ready to receive you. He calls and invites you, that you may be holy and happy, more happy here than ever you was or can be in the Ways of Sin. Think how it grieves his tender Love towards you! Think how it increases your Guilt! Think how inexcusable and speechless you must be found, if you die what you live; preferring

ing the Cup of Drunkenness; the Joys of Lewdness; the mean embittered Satisfaction of getting Money, or of living according to your own Will, in Idleness and Sloth. Making these Things your Choice, and obstinately refusing to part with them, when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost promise, upon your Return in the Way of Obedience and Faith, to come and make their Abode with you. Who can have any Love and Pity towards you, and not weep for your Delusion? To see you walking in a vain Shew, infatuated by the Pleasures of Sin, till it has ruined you for ever? When such a Divine Intercourse is prepared and ready to be opened, between God and your Soul, if you will hear the Voice of the Son of God and live!

If you refuse, O thou ungrateful Sinner, to repent at such Invitations, it is the more worthy of Lamentation, because the Promise of the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, is absolutely free for every one that repents and believes, and as soon as he does so.

Be with you all, Amen. No past Rebellion, no present Unworthiness, if you now

seek this Communion, shall keep you from sharing in it. Only beware you stagger not through Unbelief. Only beware you injure not the loving Kindness of God, by a voluntary Humility, which judges it impossible for you, on Account of your Unworthiness, to be raised to hold such high and abiding Communion with God. For what is it your Worthiness was ever the Cause of your receiving? Was it this, which induced God at first to give you your Being, or afterwards to bless, to preserve, and spare you? Was it this which moved God to give up his Son, when you was an Enemy and ungodly? How then shall he not, notwithstanding your Unworthiness, if you repent and believe, give you to possess all the Endearments of his tender Love?

Again, Is it any Want of Humility to be persuaded, that the Son of God, Maker of all Things, did actually bear our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, and was made a Curse for us? Is it any Want of Humility most assuredly to believe, that if we live and die in the Faith and Obedience of Christ, we shall see God Face to Face, and dwell with him for ever?

Why

Why then should it be thought Want of Humility, no less assuredly to believe upon the Authority of his own Promise, that God will indeed come and dwell with Men, to prepare them for his Presence and Glory? No, it is rank Pride, or Dissimulation, to plead our Unworthiness as any Bar to the Favours of God, who delights to honour his own Grace, by doing us good. Either we want to be less beholden to him, or we slight his Favours. And then for a Pretence, plead our own Unworthiness to receive them. In Proof of this, you will observe, that those Persons who talk most against Communion with God, on Account of the infinite Distance between us and him, are the farthest from serving him with Reverence and Godly Fear, from trembling at his Word, and rather suffering any Thing than offend him.

In this Manner, do you shew your Humility; and then you can never honour God more, than by expecting all he has to give; than by seeking that Fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, thro' the Spirit, which shall make your Joy to be full.

But if through the Love of Sin, ye despise and scoff at this Communion, remember it is no Enthusiasm, no Creature of Man's Imagination, but Scripture Phrase and Scripture Doctrine. And woe to those who make it a Subject of Derision, Eternal Distance, Eternal Separation from God, the Fountain of all Blessedness, will too late make them wish they had enjoyed a greater Nearness to him in Time.

And be assured of this, there cannot be a more provoking Expression both of Ingratitude and Unbelief, than to make a Mock of the very Bounty of our God. Than to reproach what is the exceeding and unsearchable Riches of his Grace, and the Plenteousness of his Redemption, as the Ravings of a heated Brain.

Such Communication and Intercourse with God, you must certainly allow our Condition requires. For look round you and see (if you are not yourself one of the Number) what a Multitude of Sufferers are pouring out their fruitless Sighs and Groans, on this Earth, Widows, without Friends, without Help, at their Wits End, how to keep their little Ones and themselves from starving. Thousands dying by
Inches

Inches on the Rack of Pain. Thousands with nothing but Trouble and Wretchedness before them, wishing for Death, but it fleeth from them. The Righteous are not more secure than others from various Tribulation and Distress.

And is there no Help for such in their God? Has God so forgotten to be gracious, that there is no Remedy, no sufficient Support and Consolation for those that seek him with their whole Heart? There is an all-sufficient Remedy placed within the Reach of all who seek it.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost. This is the Armour of God, sufficient to encounter with every Evil. And though it does not extinguish the Feeling of what is afflictive and painful, it enables the Soul to triumph over it. Established in this Communion, there is abundant Reason in the most distressing Cases, to be patient and contented. To praise God in the Midst of his Judgments, using the Prophets Words, *O Lord, Thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praise thee. For thou hast been a Strength to the Poor, a Strength to the Needy in Distress; a Refuge*

from the Storm; a Shadow from the Heat, when the Blast of the terrible Ones, is as a Storm against the Wall. Isa. xxv. 1---4.

To conclude, if any of you will not believe, there are such powerful Consolations in Christ, such Comforts of Love, and such Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, put the Trial of this Matter upon this Issue. Pray to overcome the Sins that rule over you. Search the Scriptures, and beg of God to give you all those spiritual Blessings, which his Son purchased for, and his Gospel promises to the Faithful. Persevere in this Course, you will be daily more holy, and more happy. And your Blessedness in and from God here in Time, will be only the Pledge and Earnest, that you shall be happy in him, and with him, for evermore.



S E R M O N XIII.

On the Judgment of the Last Day.

REV. XX. 11, 12, 13.

And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth, and the Heavens fled away, and there was found no Place for them.

And I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God, and Books were opened.

And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the Dead were judged out of those Things, which were written in the Books, according to their Works.

THOUGH all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, yet there are some particular Parts, which bear in a more

more lively Manner, the Divine Image, and Supercription; and carry with them an over-ruling Evidence, that they came from God.

In this Number, my Text is certainly to be placed. For, in what an awful striking Manner, does it relate the End of Time! How fully in one Point of View, does it present us, with the infinite Grandeur of the Judge; the Extent of his Judgment, and the perfect Equity, with which it is to proceed, and to be finally determined.

Now that each of these Points so interesting to us in themselves, might come with still more Force upon our Minds; God has been pleased to deliver them accompanied with some Circumstances, which would more engage our Attention, than positive Declaration.

He had often before declared, that he had appointed a Day in which he would judge the World; in which every one of us must give an Account of ourselves unto God. But in my Text, a highly-favoured Apostle is introduced, informing us, of what was made to pass before him in scenical Representation, when he was in the Spirit, and Things distant and invifible to
fleshly

fleshly Eyes, were made manifest to him,
 by the great Power of God.
 He beheld the Glory of the universal
 Judge. Of that very Person, who once
 lived in the meanest Condition of Poverty,
 and died under the utmost Ignominy of
 Shame. Then he came to bear the Sins
 of many, and to stand in the Sinner's Place.
 In that Character no Condition could be
 too low; no Infamy too great. Now he
 comes to be seen as he is, in his own pro-
 per Glory, and to execute Vengeance on his
 Enemies. He appears therefore in such
 Majesty, as infinitely surpasses, whatever
 has the Name of Grand and Splendid on
 Earth.

*I saw, saith the beloved St. John, A
 great white Throne. In its Form and Fa-
 shion infinitely Magnificent, and in the
 piercing Radiancy of its Lustre, white as
 Light.*

*And from his Face the Earth and the Hea-
 vens fled away. What aileth thee, O thou
 Earth that thou fleest? and thou starry Hea-
 ven, that there is found no Place for thee?*

Now the Time of God's Patience and
 Forbearance towards the Earth and its
 sinful Inhabitants, as was prophesied by
 Enoch,

Enoch, and repeated in every Age, by the Revelation of God, that Time is actually come. And the Earth and the Heavens being defiled through the Abominations committed by the Children of Men, their whole Frame dissolves, at his Approach, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity.

No Circumstance more awful could be chose, to describe the perfect Holiness of our Judge, than this, that not only impenitent Sinners themselves, shall not be able to stand before his Presence: But even the Earth they trod, and the material Heavens they looked upon with their Eyes, and the very Air they breathed, must all be dissolved with very fervent Heat, and totally taken down like the Leprous House.

But though the Earth and the Heavens shall pass away, the Soul of Man shall never pass away. Short-lived as we are in the Body, coming up, and cut down as a Flower: We shall, nevertheless, all survive, when the great Rocks, and the strong Mountains, and the molten Firmament are no more.

For

For the same Scene which presented to the Eyes of St. John, the Dissolution of the World, gave him to behold the whole Human Race, perfect and intire, collected together, *And I saw the Dead small and great stand before God,*

By the small are meant the poorest among the People. Often are they over-looked as insignificant Creatures, by Men of like Passions, and in their own Judgment are ever ready to conclude, that the most high God, cannot regard such mean Things, and charge himself with the continual Observation of their Ways and their Doings.

By this Means, Satan gains a terrible Advantage over many of you, my dear Brethren, who are of low Degree. For if you are at all persuaded that your own great Poverty and Meanness, will exempt you from giving an Account of yourselves, there will remain no sufficient Restraint to keep you from running into every Sin. Drunkenness, Uncleanness, Lying, Malice, and Envy, Murmuring and Complaining, will unavoidably have Dominion over you, so long as you say in your Heart, God will never call me into Judgment.

of the extensive Influence of the
against

All possible Care therefore has been taken to deliver you from this most destructive Error. The *Poor* are mentioned as the Persons more particularly regarded than any other, in the Revelation of the blessed Gospel, and in every Description of the Day of Judgment, they are comprehended as Parties no less interested than the Rich and Great.

And no Wonder, since you, the poorest amongst the People, are as much the Creatures of God, the dear Purchase of his Son's Blood, as capable of improving the Grace given to you, and of inheriting the Glory prepared, as if you stood in the first Ranks of Life. And though you have not, to answer for the Trust of great Authority and Power, still are you no less accountable than those who have, for the Manner in which you have carried yourself towards the eternal God.

Our Love or Hatred of him, our unfeigned Reverence of his Law, and of his dear and only begotten Son, or our Neglect and Contempt of them, these will be the grand Points of Enquiry concerning us all. And it is not so much the Station we have filled, or the extensive Influence of the Things

Things we have done, as the End for which they were done, and the Principle they sprung from, that makes a Day of Judgment necessary.

As Poverty therefore and Meanness of Condition, though in the last Degree, will set no one below the Notice and Judgment of God, so neither will immense Wealth, or Height of Power, set any one above it. *For he which is Lord over all, shall fear no Man's Person, neither shall he stand in awe of any Man's Greatness, for he hath made the small and great, and careth for all alike.* Wis. vi. 7. Then as it is said concerning the haughty King of Babylon, *Isai. xiv. 16.* will it be said of all the most mighty. *They that see them, shall narrowly look upon them, and consider them, saying, are these the Men that made the Earth to tremble, that did shake Kingdoms, that made the World a Wilderness, and destroyed the Cities thereof? Are they become weak as we? Are they become like unto us?* Despoiled of all Pre-eminence arising from their exalted Stations in the World, and standing upon a Level with the Rest of their fellow Creatures, to take their Trial before God. And

And the Books were opened. Observe, I beseech you, (for it is worthy of all Observation,) though the eternal God in order to teach us, how absolutely undeserved his Mercy ever comes to Sinners, had declared, *That he will be gracious, to whom he will be gracious; and whom he will be hardeneth.* And that he giveth (i. e. now) an Account of none of his Matters. Yet in the Conclusion of all Things, instead of proceeding in a sovereign arbitrary Way, saying, I will that these go away into everlasting Punishment, and those into Life eternal: He is pleased to proceed in such a Manner, as to be universally justified: He makes a Revelation of his righteous Judgment.

And the Books were opened. It is not said were read, for the Light of the last Day, will make them visible and perfectly known to all. The Judge of the whole World stands in no Need of Books to give him Information, or to prevent his erring in any Point, neither is there Forgetfulness with him. But as the Manner of Men, is to note down every Matter of vast Importance; therefore to help us to conceive more strongly the Importance of the Words we speak, of the Thoughts we think, of the

the Things we desire, and the certain Notice taken of them all, by the All-seeing God, on this Account, he is said to have *A Book of Remembrance*. An exact Register of all that is practised in the Life, and of all that passes within the Heart.

Alluding to this, the Psalmist enquires of God, concerning the flourishing State of evil Doers, *Are not these Things noted in thy Book?* And the earnest Cry of David, pained with a Sense of his horrible Wickedness, and broken in Heart, is this, *Hide thy Face from my Sins, and blot out all my Transgressions.*

In this Book of God's Remembrance, are set down, we may suppose, not only our open and secret Sins, but all our Mercies Spiritual and Temporal: The many Convictions, Rebukes, and Admonitions, afforded us most graciously by the Spirit of God: And the opening this Book signifies the bringing to our Knowledge, and the Knowledge of others, the Things written therein.

But it is not sufficient that God alone remembers, we must remember also ourselves. Otherwise the condemned would think they had just Cause to open their

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Mouths,

Mouths, complaining that Sins were laid to their Charge which they knew not.

The Heirs of Glory also, without a perfect Remembrance of themselves, could not discern the beautiful and exact Proportion between their Character whilst in a State of Trial, and their Felicity in Heaven.

On Account therefore of both, a second Book is opened. A Book which was always in the keeping of each Individual for himself: And in which it was impossible for any Thing ever to be entered, before it belonged to that very Person, to whose Account it is charged, and this is the Book of CONSCIENCE.

It is true, Conscience may be, and often is seared, and past feeling. It may appear as if it was bribed into everlasting Silence, or over-awed by customary Sinning ten, twenty, forty Years. But at last it will bring in a most accurate Account, it will testify a Thousand, a Million of Things, which like Bonds given by extravagant Spendthrifts, to griping Misers, are quite forgotten. It will speak and say thus, and thus hast thou done, and prove itself a perfect Counterpart to the Book of God's Remembrance.

Through

Through the Power of Conscience, every one that died in his Sins, will find his Iniquities convince him to his Face. He will be certified beyond the Possibility of a Doubt, that not an Oath, or a Lye, nor a prophane or filthy Jest, nor a fraudulent Bargain, nor an Omission of any Duty, is placed once more to his Account, than absolutely belongs to him. For as our truly Christian Poet expresses this alarming Sentiment:

“ Conscience,
 “ Unnoted, notes each disobedient Act.
 “ In Leaves more durable, than Leaves
 “ of Brass
 “ Writes our whole History; which
 “ Death shall read,
 “ In every pale Delinquent’s private Ear,
 “ And Judgment publish, publish to
 “ more Worlds
 “ Than this”.

Night Thoughts. No. 2.

And as the Book of Conscience, will thus bear Testimony against the Hypocrite and Unbeliever, in perfect Agreement with the Book of God’s Remembrance, so will it be a most animating and rejoicing Wit-

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ness, to all who have had their Conversation as became the Gospel of Christ.

Their frequent affectionate Discourse, about the Things of God, seasoned with Salt, and ministering Grace, to the Hearers so well pleasing to the most high God, that you read he caused a Book of Remembrance to be written thereof, Mal. iii. 16. will be fresh in their own Minds. Their unfeigned Sorrow for Sin, their Hatred of it, their sincere and entire Dependance on the Lord Jesus Christ for Wisdom, Strength, and Righteousness, their Works of Faith, their Patience of Hope, their Labours of Love, of all which it is said, *God will not be unrighteous to forget them*, will follow the Saints, and be present as the Witnesses of their Character.

Whatever of the saving Operations of Grace, has passed within the Heart of every Saint, from the Time of his first awakening to his Admission into the Rest of the People of God, will be found registered in his Conscience, perfectly agreeing with the Book of God's Remembrance, concerning him, and enabling him on this Account, as St. John expresses it, *to assure his Heart before God.*

A third Book which shall be opened, is the perfect Rule of Right and Wrong, the unerring Standard of Truth. A Book which through the distinguishing Mercy of God, is in all our Hands, by Way of Eminence, the BIBLE. As Laws of Human Governments, serve a double Purpose, both to direct and punish, to regulate the Duties of civil Life, and convict the Offender against them. So is it with Respect to the Book of God, it plainly and fully teaches you what is Sin, and what is Duty; what your Faith and Practice necessarily must be, if you are influenced by the Grace of God. It acquaints you in the most solemn Manner before-hand, of the Felicity prepared for the Faithful, and the Severity of Punishment to be inflicted on the Rebellious, who die in their Sins.

This Book therefore is opened as the Test, by which every Article of our Indictment is to be tried, that we may evidently discern the Justice of our Sentence; and how impartially we are dealt with according to Law. To a Law always revealed to, and publicly read in the Churches of God; and to obey which, Grace and Help sufficient was always af-

forded to them, which sought after it. For though the Nations that were without the written Law of God, shall be judged without Law; the Determination concerning every one, to whom the Gospel is preached, is this, *The Words that I have spoken unto him, they shall judge him in the last Day.*

This Book therefore is opened to proclaim before Men and Angels, what State of Being in the everlasting World, is appropriated to each Individual. To demonstrate, that to them who by patient Continuance in well doing, sought for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, to them, eternal Life is freely promised. Whilst to those who have been contentious, and would not obey the Truth, but obeyed Unrighteousness, to them is reserved Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish.

In each of these Books Saints and Sinners, the Obedient and Rebellious, are equally concerned, since they are equally necessary to be produced, in Proof of the real Character of both.

But we read that besides these, another Book (*τὸ ἄλλο βιβλίον*) a Book of another Kind was opened. A Book full of Grace and Love, which is the Book of Life. Blessed above

above all that can be said or conceived are they, whose Names are found written therein. Such Favour, we are assured, was bestowed on the Apostles. The same Mercy was afforded to those Women who laboured with St. Paul, in the Gospel, to Clement also, and others. From whence we have full Authority to conclude, that those and those only, of the Church of Christ in every Place and Time, who receive the Faith of Christ, like these exemplary Believers, and die as they did, in Obedience to it, have their Names also written in the Book of Life.

The full Felicity of their State, cannot be comprehended by us. Yet this is certain, that if your Name is found in that Book of Life, all your Iniquities committed before your Repentance and Conversion to God, and your innumerable Failures, through the Weakness of the Flesh, since that blessed Period, are not imputed. From the Book of God's Remembrance, they are blotted out, nor can the Book of Conscience dismay you by them. *For if the Blood of Bulls and Goats, and the Ashes of an Heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the Flesh, how much more shall the Blood of Christ cleanse from all*

Unrighteousness. The Book of the Law, can lay nothing to your Charge, from which you do not stand before-hand absolved. *Christ having redeemed you from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for you.* The full Benefit of which Redemption through your Faith and Repentance, is received by you.

And the Dead were judged out of those Things, which were written in the Books, according to their Works.

The decisive and final Sentence passed upon every immortal Soul, is answerable to the Things that were recorded in those Books respectively, according to the Evidence of, and in Proportion to their several Works, whether good or bad, as they testify in Judgment, for or against their being real Christians. For though in the Scriptures all Ground of Self-Righteousness is taken away, and the Whole of Man's Salvation in the meritorious Cause of it, is constantly and solely ascribed to Grace through Faith, yet the *Necessity* of good Works, and of their evidencing for us, that we belong to Christ, is uniformly maintained. That Golden Medium is always preserved, between proud Pharisaic Boasting, as if there was any Thing of deserving
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in Man, or approaching to it, before the Eyes of God's Purity : And between that infinitely more satanical Doctrine of the Antinomians, which sets the moral Law at Defiance, and blasphemes Christ, as if he had abolished all Obligations to obey it, as he did with respect to the ceremonial Law,

To be judged, in this Place, signifies to be separated and disposed of, whether to the Happiness of Angels, or to the Torments of lost or damned Spirits. And every one according to their Works, shall have a Place assigned them in the happy, or miserable Eternity. Both the Quality and Quantity of what we have done, will be exactly estimated. Those who have most adorned the Gospel of God their Saviour, and made the nearest Approaches to his perfect Example, in the Strength of their Faith, in their Love to God, in the Purity of their Life and Manners, shall shine with a Glory proportionally greater than others, who have only just escaped the Corruptions of the World, and stood, as it were, only within the Limits of Salvation. He that hath consecrated his All to God : If wealthy, his Riches in the Use and Application of them ; if learned, his Wisdom

dom and Understanding; if in Power, his great Authority, to the establishing the Kingdom of Righteousness, and promoting the Glory of God, will have a much more exalted Place in Heaven, than those who with much fainter Zeal, were yet sincerely engaged in the same Cause.

One Degree of Happiness will be appointed to those, whose State and Condition here, was free from severe Trials and Crosses distressing above Measure; whilst those who did eat only the Bread of Adversity, and drank of the bitter Cup of Affliction, with faithful Meekness and with Patience, will be crowned with a far *more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

The old Disciple who has persevered twenty, forty Years, steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, till he is grown hoary in his Master's blessed Service, will be judged to wear a brighter Crown, than the young Soldier of Christ, who just entered the Field of Battle and fought victoriously for a short Season against Sin, the World, and the Devil, till he was received into Heaven.

Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, wherever they are found

found in Truth, will testify for those who possess them, that the Promises and Grace of Christ belong to them, but the Measure in which they shall receive the great Remuneration of Reward, will be determined according to their Works.

In like Manner, as the many Mansions in our Father's House are assigned to the Saints, according to their respective Advancements in Grace and Holiness, so the Degrees of Punishment to which those who die in their Sins are doomed, is answerable to their Character. One Degree for the Formal and Self-righteous, who neglected the only Saviour of Sinners; another for the Drunkard, the Fornicator, the Adulterer, and the Covetous. One Measure of Torment for the Malicious and Implacable; another for the Scornier and Corrupter of Others; and the heaviest Doom of all, to the Hypocrite, who makes God serve with his Iniquity. And each of these, now unpardonable Offenders, in Proportion to the Time they have gone on in their Wickedness; in Proportion to the Warnings and Calls they have refused to comply with, shall be found to have treasured up for themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath

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and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.

There are three Inferences, amongst many, that might be drawn from this most awful Subject, with which I shall conclude.

I. The first is, That you pay a just and inviolable Regard to the Accusations of your own Conscience. This is one of the Books which will be opened in the great and terrible Day of the Lord. Whilst we are travelling through this World, what passes in our Breasts, for many wise and necessary Purposes, is secret and invisible to others. Therefore it is, that so many dare trifle with Conscience, and rather submit to bear its Lashes, than forego unlawful Gain, or Pleasure, or put up with the Sneers of an ungodly World. But consider how very short your Concealment is to be. As certain as we are now in this Assembly together, we shall know all that has been in the Thoughts of each others Hearts, concerning God and Duty; *for there is nothing Secret, which shall not be made manifest.* Tremble at this, thou whited Sepulchre, thou blind Pharisee, who art studious only to get the Praise of Men, to
have

have the Name of honest, or religious, when inwardly thou art neither. Tremble did I say; yea, rather yield to the Light that is still in thee; and remember for your own Sake, that if the Book of Conscience is full of Accusations against thee, all your good Character, is like the Plunder of Robbers, sure to remain no longer with you, than the Day of your Trial. Above all Things, reverence your Conscience, and as you would dread to have it a swift Witness against you, before the great white Throne, neither for Fear nor Favour, ever bring upon yourself its Rebukes; or ever strive to resist, and shake them off. Follow, where they would lead you, to Shame and Self-condemnation; to Repentance, Prayer, and the Blood of Atonement; the Effect of which will be *the Answer of a good Conscience by the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead.*

2. Another necessary Conclusion from hence is a high, increasing, and invincible Regard to the Bible, which is the Word of God. Custom and Fashion now in this World, bear an almost irresistible Sway. Pride, Idleness, Sensuality and Lewdness, with many other detestable Sins, find shel-

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ter under the Sanction of general Practice. But Safety there is none, unless the Law and the Testimony be on your side. This is great, and will prevail. The Custom of the World will be so unable to stand before it, in the last Day, impudent and tyrannical as it now is, that not a Sinner will dare so much as to mention it, in excuse for himself.

Now therefore pray that you may understand what the Word of God teaches is the Will of God concerning you. Acquaint yourself beforehand with it, that no Part of it may bring any Charge against you, which shall bind the Wrath of God upon you. Never flatter yourself there is Mercy, Peace, and Safety for you, till you can plainly prove yourself a Disciple of Christ, and that you have the written Promises of God, ensuring your Title to his Favour. However highly esteemed amongst Men, look upon yourself as despised and sure to be rejected of God, till you can say, the Words which Christ has left upon Record, and which shall judge me in the last Day, are all my Dependance, to them I make my appeal: By them only will I be governed, and care not who is, or can be against me, if they be for me.

3. If

3. If it is the unchangeable Decree of God, that we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ: What then can more deserve the Name of Folly and of Frenzy, than not to be as careful and solicitous at least, as Prisoners use to be, who are to take their Trial in an Earthly Court. Let us then suppose, we were now in the Hands of Justice, expecting in a very short Time to be brought forth, and to be tried for our Lives. In this Case, what should we do, one and all? What Measures should we take? Should we sit down in Idleness? Should we divert the Time by foolish Amusements, or intoxicating Excess? No, we should be preparing for our Trial, consulting with our Lawyer, studying our Defence or Answers to the Witnesses, that we apprehended would appear against us; and be doing all in our Power to recommend our Case to the Judge, from whom we were to receive our Sentence. In this Manner we should act, if it might secure our Lives and Fortunes; and if the Neglect of such Means, would certainly end in the Loss of both.

Now, though the Case here supposed, is no more than the Shadow of our Condition,

tion, the Measures to be made use of, are exactly the same. This World is your Prison: You must be brought, whether you will or no into Judgment, for there is no stepping back again into nothing. A Sentence of Damnation, the most dreadful to endure, must be your Doom, or one of full and purest Happiness your just Reward. What then alone, and before all Things, is to be done? Certainly an Interest must be procured in your Judge; the Favour of the REDEEMER must be sought for, as better than Life itself; sought for, by putting your Trust in him, as able to deliver you from all your Enemies, and as having made Reconciliation for your Iniquity. An Interest must be preserved by abiding in the Obedience of Faith to him, and by being formed and fashioned according to his Word.

By this Means, you will be sure to meet with a Smile from his reconciled Countenance, and a Sentence of Acquittal from his own Mouth, when he appears on the great white Throne. Now honour the Son as you honour the Father, adhere to him as the Author and Finisher of your Faith. Follow him as the Captain of your Salvation. Pray more and more for the
Love

Love of his Name, for a Spirit obedient to his Gospel, for an increasing Knowledge of his Grace and Merits, and of the Efficacy of his Blood and Righteousness. And then though he appears in such Majesty, as to fill all his Adversaries and Despisers with Consternation and Despair; you, with infinite Joy and Transport, will behold him, All-sufficient to answer the vast Expectations, his Gospel hath encouraged you to place on him. And in that Day you shall say: *Lo! this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; we will be glad and rejoice in his Salvation.* Isaiah xxv. 9.



S E R M O N XIV.

On the Nature of the Heavenly
Happiness.



RE V. xxii. 3.

*But the Throne of God, and of the Lamb
shall be in it, and his Servants shall serve
him.*

THERE is such a manifest Difference in the Scripture Account of the Happiness of the blessed World, from every Account of it devised by Man, as plainly proves it came from Above. This will appear undeniable upon the Comparison. The Description Mahomet has left in the Koran, of his Paradise, is no other than that of Lust and Sensuality indulged to the uttermost. An Excess of such base, defiling Pleasure as the Lascivious
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only love to wallow in, and which the Excellent of the Earth, are even here purified enough to scorn and loath.

And if we turn our Eyes from the Account of the blessed World, given by this most shameless Impostor, to that which is given us, by those renowned for Wisdom, and for Virtue, who were not taught by the Word of God; though we shall meet with nothing so gross and abominable as the Musselman's Creed; still the Author and the End of all Things, is strangely overlooked. Even the most distinguished Socrates, when discoursing, with such extraordinary Degrees of Clearness and Assurance on the Immortality of the Soul, yet carries his Views no higher, than to the Enjoyment of better Company; than to an Intercourse the most friendly and perfect, with Hesiod, with Homer, and others, whose Names have been transmitted down to Posterity with the highest Honour.

The same Sentiment, you will see copied by Tully, who introduces the great Scipio, as fired with the Prospect of Admission into the Assembly of the Illustrious deceased, and in this View setting Death at Defiance.

But how miserably short and defective, alas! is such a Description of the Happiness of the blessed World? How foolish and absurd to paint out the Happiness of the immortal Spirit of Man, as compleat, without any Knowledge of, or Communion with God, from whom proceeds all that deserves the Name of Good and Excellent. Who is himself incomprehensibly Blessed, and the only Fountain of Happiness to his Creatures.

But as these wise Men, knew not God, no marvel, they glorified him not as God, nor magnified his Name as the Source of their Felicity in another World, who was not rejoiced nor delighted in, as their chief Good in this.

Let us therefore turn our Eyes from the Conjectures of Men, who had no Light but that of Nature and Tradition to guide them, to the life-giving Scriptures of our God. Read the scriptural Account of Heaven, you will find the Glory due unto the Name of God ascribed unto him. And *he by whom are all Things, and for whom are all Things*, is set before us, as constituting the Happiness of those who are received up on High, by the Manifestation of his
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own Excellency: By his reigning before them in all the Glories of perfect Wisdom and Love. *The Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his Servants shall serve him.*

In discoursing on these Words, I shall,

I. Explain their Meaning.

II. Make some Reflexions on the Truth they teach us.

I. The Kingdom of God ruleth over all; his Power irresistibly prevails no less in Earth, and in Hell, than within the Gates of the Heavenly City. It is the Arm of the Lord, which binds the fallen Angels in everlasting Chains, unto the Judgment of the last Day. *And doth whatsoever he will in the Armies of Heaven, and amongst the Inhabitants of the Earth.*

Nevertheless, it cannot be said, that either on Earth or in Hell, is the Throne of God; because in the one, his Power is blasphemed, and were it possible, would be overthrown; and in the other, is generally despised, and never so fully revered and obeyed as it ought to be.

Now the Throne of a King is always fixed in the Midst of his Dominion; where Majesty receives its due Homage; and Loyalty and Friendship are on every Side. Therefore, when we are told, that in the Heavenly Jerusalem, shall be the Throne of God, the Meaning is, that there God is ever acknowledged, and most thankfully adored as the Author of all Things, and the immediate Fountain of all Good. Though this Truth is denied on Earth, by none, but the most dissolute and abominable, yet is it forgotten and overlooked by all in a more or less Degree. What makes Beauty so intoxicated with Admiration of its own Form; what prompts the Rich to be haughty and self-sufficient; the wise Man to glory in his Wisdom; nay, the spiritual Man to be puffed up with Gifts, or Grace? What, but the shameful, guilty Forgetfulness of that Truth, *that no Man can receive any Thing except it be given him from above, and that it is God that maketh him to differ.*

Now in Heaven, the Giver and the Gift are never, even in Idea, considered apart. But just in the same lively Manner in which the grateful Mind feels itself affected at the first,

first, by some amazing Act of Generosity towards it; equally, and at the same Moment, rejoicing in the Favour, and the Bounty of the Person conferring it. So without Interruption or Abatement, do the Souls in Heaven feel, that *in God they live, and move, and have their Being*, and therefore his Throne is said to be there.

Again, in the heavenly Jerusalem, God is constantly perceived to be the End of all Things. Self-love, and Self-will, are subdued with much Difficulty and great Labour on Earth; and therefore so few attain to this noblest of all Victories. Practically to be influenced by this Truth, that God's Honour and Glory ought alone to be exalted, whose we are, and by whom we subsist, though so reasonable, so evident a Truth, that none but Atheists can deny it, is very rare. The greater Part of the Inhabitants, even of Christian Countries, trample with Indignation upon this very Notion, and refuse Subjection even to those Commands of the most high God, which forbid the grossest Offences. Amongst the Decent and Regular, there is no less of Selfishness in another Shape, than with open Sinners. And even with

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those who make Profession of Godliness; it is a few only, who with Singleness of Heart, desire that God may be magnified in them, and they in him. Whenever a severe Trial comes; whenever something much beloved must be given up, or something much disliked must be endured: Then alas! how is Self-will, and Man's own imaginary Way of securing his own Welfare, found to be put in direct Opposition to the Will and Pleasure of God.

Where the Throne of God is, there is no Tincture of such a Spirit remaining. The Spirits above, are always filled with a lively, powerful Consciousness, that they are nothing, and that God is all in all. That they receive all their Honours, and possess their perfect Blessedness, to shew forth the overflowing Riches of his Grace. With delightful Adoration, they acknowledge themselves, and all they are, to be the absolute Property of God, and expressing their Renunciation of Themselves, as having any Will distinct from that of God, they say, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour and Power, for thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure, they are, and were created.* Rev. iv. 11.

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Further, By the Throne of God, we may well understand, a clear and comprehensive Knowledge of his Excellency and Glory. Compare the brightest and most worthy Conceptions you have of God, with his Character as it is drawn by the Holy Ghost in Scripture. Your Ideas of his Wisdom, or his Power, his Goodness or his Purity, with what you find affirmed concerning each of these Perfections, and you will confess how very little you know of God. And even when this Knowledge in your Head, is proved by the correspondent Impressions, it makes on your Heart, and the Attachment it produces in you, to the Will of God, and his Truth, it will be found still more defective.

In the Heavenly City, these Defects and Obscurities of our Knowledge in the Things pertaining to God, now so humbling, and so mortifying to the Heirs of Salvation, will be removed. *For when that which is perfect is come, that which is in Part shall be done away.* 1 Cor. xiii. 10. And though now we must see through a Glass darkly, the faithful Soul is no sooner translated to the Mansions above, than it sees God, Face to Face, and knows him
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by a Sort of immediate Inspection, resembling that with which we are now known of God. 2 Cor. xiii. 12. Now those that have ever been taught by Experience, the inexpressible Pleasure, of having at some favoured Seasons, strongly affecting Views by Faith of God; who have adored him under lively Perceptions of his Wisdom, Power, and Grace; those only can at all conceive, what Excess, what Purity of Joy, must overflow the immortal Mind, when it sees *the King in his Beauty in the Land which is very far off*. When every Excellency and Perfection, which now appears diminished, like the Stars in the Firmament, into a little Point of Light, through our Ignorance and Distance from God, shall shine before our Eyes in its full Proportion.

Thus by the Throne of God, in the Heavenly City, we may understand the continual delightful Perfection and Adoration of God, as the Author and the End of all Things, under the clear, lively Knowledge of his Excellency and Glory.

It is added, and *the Throne of the Lamb shall be in it*. What, or who is this Lamb? That he is honoured even as the Father: That his Throne is mentioned as one and the

the same. Beyond all Imagination strange would it be, should any Creature be made thus equal with the Creator. But it is not so. For upon searching the Scripture, you will find from the Characters given of the *Lamb* by the Prophets, the Apostles, and from his own Mouth, that he is God of God, of one Nature and Substance, with the Father, that he is honoured with the same divine Names, and worshipped with supreme immediate Adoration, and therefore is to be adored also, together with the Father to all Eternity. And what deserves in this Place very particular Observation, it is not said, the Throne of the Son of God, or of the Lord, but the Throne of the *Lamb* shall be in it.

The Name of the *Lamb*, was given to him entirely on Account of the sin-atonings Sacrifice, he made when as a *Lamb* without Spot or Blemish he offered himself up, through the eternal Spirit on the Cross. The Memorial of this his abundant Kindness is to remain for ever, and so long as the Kingdom and Felicity of the Saints endure, the meritorious Cause of both, and the Foundation on which alone they stand, are built, is continually to be

acknowledged. For by the Throne of the Lamb's being there, it is implied, I suppose, that the all-sufficient Efficacy of his Blood once shed, the Power of his Resurrection, the Success of his Interposition, as the Surety and Mediator of all who come to God by him, are loudly and for ever acknowledged. These astonishing Instances of his Love, are not only not denied to be the Cause and Source of all Happiness to Sinners: But the Glory of them is not in the least Degree shaded by any injurious Self-righteous Claim. All the Felicity of the Church Triumphant is ever enjoyed with unbounded Thankfulness to God the Son, as the Author and Finisher of their Salvation. According to the Sense of that Hymn which is recorded. Rev. v. 11. 12. *Worthy art thou, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, (i. e. from the Bondage of Sin and Satan) out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Blessing.*

This Knowledge of the Glory and Excellency of God, and the *Lamb*, is to be
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the subject Matter of the Felicity of God's People, in their Heavenly Habitation. The Impression it will make on them and the noble Effects it will produce in them, are described in the following Words.

And his Servants shall serve him.

To be numbered in the Household of God by Faith here below, was dearer to every Saint, than even Life itself. Rather than lose this Privilege, some of them in the Days of their Flesh, were slain with the Sword. Others were destitute, afflicted, tormented; all were tried and tempted. *The Servants of God*, was their Character most honourable and distinguished. This they were careful to maintain, by uniform persevering Obedience to the Authority and Government of God; by renouncing all Pretensions to live according to their own Lusts, or in the Way of the World.

Nevertheless here on Earth their best Services were sadly defective. Through the Weakness of the Flesh, frequently stained and always short of what the Law of God or his Perfections demand. So that it was rather the Sincerity of their Intentions, and the Loyalty of their Hearts, than the

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Services themselves, that were regarded. Of this the Servants of God, are so conscious even now, as to entertain very low Thoughts of their best Attainments. And though in the Days before their Conversion to God, they would scarce allow, through the Blindness and Hardness of their Hearts, that even their wilful Transgressions, deserved the Wrath of God, revealed against them. After their Conversion, when they are really the Servants of God, they take up the Words of Job, and say every one, *If I wash myself with Snow Water, and make my Hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the Ditch, and mine own Cloaths shall abhor me.* Job. ix. 30. 31. *Behold! I am vile.* They see so much wanting, so much amiss, so little Resemblance in the Spirit of their Minds to that Jesus, after whose Image they are to form themselves. But in the Heavenly City, *his Servants do serve him*, with perfect Alacrity and Perseverance. No Darkness or Ignorance remains in their Understanding. They know whom they serve, how honourable, how excellent it is to pay Obedience to him in all Things. And the same Discovery of God, which enlightens their Understanding, in-
flames

flames also their Affection, and fills them with Zeal to execute the Will of God.

Besides, they taste continually the exalted Pleasures, which result from doing the Will of God, as it is done in Heaven by the Saints. They are no longer burdened with that evil Nature, which whilst they were in the Body, still lusted against the Spirit; and occasioned the Contradiction between their Judgment and their Will: This Body of Sin and Death being removed out of the Way, they are always active in the Service of God, without any Wearisomeness or Luke-warmness. What is declared in the Word of our God, but now too seldom and too faintly credited, is the glorious Thought which ever possesses the Inhabitants of Heaven, that the Law of the Lord is perfect LIBERTY, his Service Freedom, and Subjection to him greater Honour, than universal Empire. In the last Place, what adds greatly also, to encourage and call forth all the Strength of all the Saints in Heaven, to serve God with all Gladness, is the Judgment and Practice of all about them. Nobility of Birth, and splendour of Appearance at Courts, Courage and Honour in an Army, Wealth and Gain in a City of Commerce,

merce, are not so universally extolled, are not by such constant Discourse represented as valuable and excellent, as doing the Will of God, is throughout the whole Extent of Heaven. And with what increasing Alacrity and Delight do we pursue, what we not only feel to be highly gratifying to ourselves, but what makes us at the same Time, most honourable, and acceptable to all around us.

What has been thus briefly offered, unfolds something of the Meaning of the Text, and will furnish you with Hints for further Meditation, on the Nature of the Heavenly Happiness. I proceed,

II. To make some Reflections on the Truth, which the Text teaches us. It affords an awakening Instruction, to the ignorant and careless Sinner; and strong Consolation to every Servant of God. For from hence you may be persuaded of the absolute Necessity of that Course of Christian and Godly Living, which you hear so continually pressed in Scripture, and so vehemently enforced by every faithful Minister. Such a Life is not required of you, as proceeding from an arbitrary Injunction, and the mere Command of the eternal God;

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which may or may not be dispensed with. But it is insisted on, as a Course of Education, absolutely needful to form and fashion the Temper and Disposition of the Soul, for the Enjoyment and Felicity of the great City, the City of the living God. Suppose a Family born and nursed up in the most violent Antipathy to the King on the Throne, so strongly attached to a rival Power, as to have no Joy, equal to that of opposing by all Means, the Exercise of his just Authority, and of vilifying his Administration, and his Friends. Do not you see in the very Nature of Things, before any one of this Family, could be permitted to dwell near the Throne; before his Heart, could have Pleasure in such a Situation, he must be made *Loyal*. Otherwise he would be self-tormented and miserable, through Want of some rebellious Subject like himself, to whom he might unbosom the rankling Enmity concealed within.

Now this is our sad Case, with Respect to the King of Heaven. We are all by Nature Haters of God. *For the carnal Mind is Enmity against God.* We all affect what Adam did when he fell, and sin after the Similitude of his Transgression, desiring to be

like GOD, above all command and controul. Subjection though to an infinitely wise, tender, and gracious Father, is irksome and galling to us; and however dissembled and disguised, so it continues to be, till we are reconciled, till true Repentance towards GOD, and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, has cured the rebellious disaffected Spirit towards the most High, which was in us. And unless this Spirit is cured, unless we are brought before we leave this World, to give Glory to the GOD of Heaven, unless we can now with thankful Hearts, cry, *The Lord is King, the Earth may be glad thereof*, we shall never with the Inhabitants of Heaven sing Hallelujah, *for the Lord GOD omnipotent reigneth*. For if the Commandments of GOD, if the Yoke of Christ, are grievous till Death, they will continue so, to all Eternity. If your Spirit does not now unfeignedly give Adoration, Love, and Obedience, whilst in the Body, it cannot possibly be ever changed. Of Consequence as there is but one Place of Happiness, to which you are called, even *GOD's Kingdom and Glory*, if you die unqualified for this, you can be fit only for the Company and the Place, where Hatred to, and Rebellion

against God rule in every Heart, and that Place is Hell.

Say not therefore in thy Heart, thou careless, unconcerned Sinner, "God's Mercy is great. He will be pacified for all my Iniquity, and though I die with an Heart full of Love to Sin, unsubdued and unchanged, yet I shall not perish for ever".

Say not so, for it is in the Nature of Things impossible, that dying in this Spirit and Temper, you should ever enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Because if you are saved, before you are delivered from your Hatred and Contempt of God's Government and Law, he must not only act in Opposition to his Justice and Holiness, but change also the Constitution even of Heaven itself. Heaven instead of being filled with the Brightness of his Glory, and never ceasing Praise, must abound with the Insolence of Ungodliness and Sin; and together with the Throne of God, and the Lamb, Satan's Throne must be erected too.

Let me intreat you to allow this Thought, the Consideration its Truth and Importance demands. In Illustration of it, remember that it is impossible to discharge many Offices in common Life, without an Edu-

cation and Teaching suited to that very End: Which if neglected too long, would you give the whole World, it cannot be retrieved. Much more impossible is it, to ascend into the Hill of the Lord, and to rise up with all his Saints and Servants, in his dwelling Place, unless the Heart has been first touched with Love to his ever-blessed Name, practised in all dutiful Obedience to his Authority, and from thence filled with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory, to be there where God is worthily magnified, where without ceasing they cry unto him, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts.*

It is this Impossibility, and only this, which is asserted in those most awful and alarming Scriptures, *Except ye repent and be converted, ye shall all likewise perish. Marvel not that I say unto you, ye must be born again.* For on this Foundation only, the Necessity of Repentance, Conversion, and the New-birth for every Child of Adam, stands, *viz.* That without such a Change as these Words describe, it is not possible to be a Servant of God, or to dwell where the Throne of God, and the Lamb is,

2. What Words of strong Consolation are these to you, who are faithful and obedient Servants of the most high God. Who have happily yourselves chosen, and by the laudable Singularity of a Christian Conversation, shew unto others, the Way of Life, Whatever is a Grief and sore Burden, to you now to bear, will be abundantly recompensed, when you are exalted to your eternal Habitation. Do you now lay to Heart, and mourn in Secret, over the shocking Transgressions committed by the Multitude, who outrage God's Grace and Spirit, by living in Uncleaness, Injustice, Prophaneness, or Uncharitableness? Are you afflicted to behold the Cowardice of the pretended Friends of God, in their Vindication of his Honour, and opposing his Adversaries? Do these Things vex your righteous Soul, as they did Lot of old? Be comforted with the Thought the Time will shortly come, when you shall rejoice. For as the Israelites carried by miraculous Grace safe over the Red Sea, saw not one Egyptian more: So when you are brought to the Land wherein dwelleth Righteousness, never shall your Ears hear, or your Eyes behold any Thing favouring
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of the least Neglect, Slight, or Forgetfulness of God. You shall mingle amongst the innumerable Myriads, who are all zealous for God's Glory, as was his dear Son, when he drove the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple. Who by every Action, by every Word, by every Look, shall express what is the Joy of your Heart, to know; *Thine O God, is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, from Everlasting to Everlasting.*

Again, You who are now faithful Servants of God and the Lamb, feel often what all others are Strangers too, you feel much Self-Condernation and Vileness, for your low and mean Apprehensions of God, for the little and weak Impressions his infinite Wisdom, his Love in Christ, and all his Excellencies make upon you. You are ashamed of the poor Manner in which you worship him; of your frequent Distractions in Time of Prayer; and confounded that you love him no more, and serve him no better. You ask nothing this World can give you. All you desire is included in this single Petition, that you may know the eternal God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. Tarry thou the Lord's Leisure,
and

and he shall give thee thy Heart's Desire,
and fulfill all thy Mind. Shortly you shall
put off this earthly Tabernacle, and with
it the darkening Medium, through which
you now behold your God. Then you shall
be translated to a Kingdom infinitely friendly
and favourable, to the ruling Temper and
Spirit of your Mind, a Kingdom which
*The Glory of God doth lighten, and the
Lamb is the Light thereof.*

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and he shall give thee thy Heart's Desire,
and fulfill all thy Mind. Shortly you shall
put off this earthly Tunic, and with
it the delectable Melancholy, through which
you now behold your Lord. Then you shall
be translated to a Kingdom infinitely friendly
and favourable, to the ruling Temper and
"Spirit of your Mind, a Kingdom which
the City of Jerusalem, and the
Land of the Living.

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